



# Security Council

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## **Letter dated 26 May 2022 from the Special Adviser and Head of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant addressed to the President of the Security Council**

I have the honour to transmit herewith, in accordance with paragraph 3 of Security Council resolution [2597 \(2021\)](#), the eighth report on the activities of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant.

I would be grateful if the present letter and the report were brought to the attention of the members of the Security Council and issued as a document of the Council.

*(Signed)* Christian **Ritscher**  
Special Adviser and Head of the Investigative Team



## **Eighth report of the Special Adviser and Head of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant**

### *Summary*

The eighth report on the activities of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution [2597 \(2021\)](#).

The reporting period was marked by progress across all investigative lines of inquiry, including the completion of an initial case assessment report on the use of chemical and biological weapons by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, also known as Da'esh) in Iraq. Notably, the Team identified internal directives and communications from leadership figures within the group, which regulated and incentivized the use of chemical weapons, including direct involvement at the highest levels in the provision of specific financial rewards to ISIL forces deploying such weapons. Financial, commercial and public sector infrastructure was deliberately misappropriated, including the University of Mosul, where ISIL established a centre of operations to produce chemical weapons. Testimonial evidence, medical records and clinical admissions data gathered in relation to the attack in Tazah Khurmatu on 8 March 2016 contain acute signs and symptoms among victims, consistent with exposure to a chemical agent.

Investigations into Bayt al-Mal, the central treasury department of ISIL, progressed rapidly during the reporting period. Initial findings indicate that Bayt al-Mal provided vital material and financial support for the group, including managing payments from Diwan al-Jund, the group's ministry of the army, and specifically those units within the Diwan that are alleged to have committed international crimes. Overall, Bayt al-Mal was fundamental to the day-to-day operations of ISIL and central to the implementation of its objectives. Its responsibilities included the management of vast wealth generated from pillage and persecuting select minorities through theft, and the establishment of a localized yet robust financial system that supported the commission of international crimes.

To date, the Team has preserved and converted to usable digital formats over 4.5 million physical pages of documentary evidence at relevant courts across Iraq, up from 2.2 million pages at the end of the previous reporting period. The Team anticipates that, by the end of 2022, it will have supported the digitization of more than half of the total estimated number of pages of available paper documentary evidence relating to ISIL in Iraq, all of which was previously available only as perishable paper copies and at serious risk of degradation or loss.

In cooperation with the Mass Graves Directorate of the Martyrs Foundation and the Medico-Legal Directorate of the Ministry of Health, excavations at three mass grave locations at and around Hardan junction in Sinjar were completed in early March 2022. More than 50 bodies and multiple items of associated evidence were recovered at that site through the joint efforts of field experts. In addition, forensic archaeological excavations were completed in Sinjar town and around Badush ravine, the latter in relation to the execution of predominantly Shia detainees from Badush prison. The Team donated a laboratory information management system along with DNA matching software to the DNA identification laboratory of the Medical-Legal Directorate. That system, along with training on its use, is the single largest donation that the Team has made to the Iraqi authorities. The system enhances the authorities'

ability to perform DNA matches at scale, with a view to accelerating the return of identified remains to their next of kin.

The provision of investigative services and other forms of support has strengthened the evidence base on which joint case-building activities can be conducted between the Team and members of the Iraqi judiciary. In that regard, support to Iraqi investigative judges and investigators in the development of case files for the prosecution of ISIL members for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide continued in the reporting period. The Team works with them on a regular basis in the identification of key perpetrator candidates for case-building and the preparation of specific case files. The Special Adviser, recognizing that the investigative work of the Team is shifting rapidly from structural investigations to the development of case files against perpetrators, established a dedicated case-building unit in order to facilitate and increase capacity in support of this priority and enhance cooperation in specific areas with the Iraqi judiciary.

The Team, consistent with its terms of reference, placed a particular emphasis on improving information-sharing with the Government of Iraq and the Iraqi judiciary during the reporting period. Accordingly, the Team sought to expand and deepen arrangements that had been put in place in 2021 with select members of the Iraqi judiciary that would allow for the sharing of information relevant to ISIL financing in Iraq. Furthermore, the Team presented the key findings of its investigations into crimes against the Yazidi community and against the personnel of Tikrit Air Academy to members of the National Coordinating Committee. Finally, the Team is working closely with the National Security Advisory to conclude an arrangement that would enable the Team to share information that would support the development by Iraq of application packages for Security Council sanctions listings and asset freezing efforts at the domestic level.

The Team continued to leverage technology and innovation to become more efficient in the processing, discovery and analysis of evidence. In that regard, the “Zeteo” project transitioned into full production mode, allowing the Team to gain insights into the digital evidence it has collected. So far, the application has successfully processed and indexed over 1,223 hours, or two months, of video and audio evidence relating to ISIL that are in the holdings of the Team. As a result, more than 30,000 unique human faces have been captured for use in matching efforts, a development that directly helps in identifying evidence that is potentially relevant to ongoing lines of investigative inquiry.

Finally, the Team further strengthened its ability to provide support to ongoing domestic legal proceedings in Member States, in cooperation with the Government of Iraq. The full roll-out of Zeteo is one concrete example of its efforts in that regard. A total of 15 Member States have requested assistance from the Team with respect to ongoing investigations and prosecutions. In response to a specific request, the Team supported the Swedish Prosecution Authority during the trial of a Swedish woman being tried for committing international crimes, particularly war crimes committed during her time with ISIL, ultimately resulting in a conviction. The support provided by the Team included expert testimony in relation to ISIL practices on the enlistment, conscription and use of child soldiers.

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## I. Introduction

1. The eighth report on the activities of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (UNITAD) is hereby submitted to the Security Council.

2. During the reporting period, the Investigative Team continued its investigations pursuant to its mandate to support domestic efforts to hold Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, also known as Da'esh) accountable for acts that may amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. The work of the Team was conducted in accordance with Security Council resolution [2379 \(2017\)](#) and the terms of reference for the activities of the Team in Iraq ([S/2018/118](#), annex), as approved by the Council on 13 February 2018. In line with paragraph 3 of resolution [2379 \(2017\)](#), the Special Adviser and Head of the Investigative Team has also continued to engage closely with survivor groups, national authorities, religious actors and non-governmental organizations in order to promote, both in Iraq and globally, accountability for crimes committed by ISIL and to work with survivors to ensure that their interests in achieving accountability for ISIL are fully recognized.

3. The reporting period was marked by progress across all investigative lines of inquiry. Following the finalization of case briefs, the initial investigative priorities of the Team – crimes against the Yazidi community, against the personnel of Tikrit Air Academy and against Badush prisoners – have pivoted towards the identification of perpetrators most responsible for these crimes, and the building of targeted case files in cooperation with the Iraqi judiciary. Investigations into the Rawi network, Bayt al-Mal (the central ISIL treasury) and the development and use of chemical and biological weapons by ISIL are also transitioning to the perpetrator-focused phase of the work. Efforts to conclude the remaining structural investigations continued, notably for the crimes committed against the Christian, Sunni, Kaka'i, Shabak and Shia Turkmen communities, with an initial case assessment regarding the crimes against the Christian community anticipated before the end of the next reporting period. The Team continues to pivot towards the development of case files, in partnership with the Iraqi judiciary, resulting in a greater portion of its investigative resources being focused on perpetrators and those most responsible for the crimes of ISIL.

4. There was a surge in the amount of evidence collected in support of these investigative lines during the reporting period, owing to working modalities returning to normal, and a corresponding increase in daily field deployments. Beyond the fieldwork of investigative units, the surge was driven by the implementation of key field-based, evidence-centric activities, such as the digitization and archiving of ISIL evidence, and the excavation of mass graves. Guided by international standards and empowered by cutting-edge technology, the Team further progressed in its data-centric approach to the intake, management and security of evidence in its holdings. Whereas before the processing of a piece of evidence through the evidence management life cycle could take weeks, the Team can now process evidence in a matter of days in order to have it in the evidence management system and available to analysts and investigators. Efforts to automate the discovery of relevant evidence in its holdings, notably through the Zeteo project (see [S/2021/974](#), paras. 81–83) and the use of artificial intelligence, have increased the range of relevant evidence that is available and reduced the need to rely on additional human resources for labour-intensive tasks.

5. The Team remains grateful for the steadfast support of the Government of Iraq, the Iraqi judiciary and the authorities of the Kurdistan Regional Government in the implementation of its mandate. Led by the Special Adviser, the Team held a series of

special events, notably in New York and Berlin, during the reporting period so as to promote this close collaboration and shared progress towards the common aim of ISIL accountability. The Team also appreciates the support from Member States, many of which have contributed additional human and financial resources to assist the Team. It also continues to engage with the communities affected by such crimes and with local and international non-governmental organizations and international partners whose contributions remain invaluable and a cornerstone of its investigative and evidence collection efforts.

## **II. Status of investigations**

### **A. Progress in investigative priorities**

6. The Team achieved a number of landmarks during the reporting period in its lines of inquiry into crimes committed by ISIL. Drawing on six dedicated field investigation units and two thematic investigation units based in Baghdad, Dahuk and Erbil, the Team continues to maintain its capacity to undertake investigations in relation to crimes committed against all communities affected by ISIL crimes in Iraq, further strengthening an evidence base that is now being leveraged in support of domestic investigations and prosecutions.

7. The completion of an initial case assessment report on the development and use of chemical and biological weapons by ISIL in Iraq was one such landmark. The report builds on the four case briefs finalized during the previous reporting periods, addressing crimes committed against the Yazidi community in Sinjar beginning in August 2014; the mass killing of unarmed cadets near Tikrit in June 2014; crimes committed by ISIL in and around Badush prison near Mosul in June 2014; and the al-Rawi network and the facilitation of ISIL financing. In addition, the Team anticipates completing the case assessment report on the crimes against Christians in the upcoming months.

8. The Supreme Judicial Council of Iraq, and specifically the Chief Justice and Head of the Supreme Judicial Council, remains a critical partner in supporting the investigative activities of the Team. Investigative judges and investigators from courts across Iraq equally deserve recognition in this regard. Their contribution has been an indispensable part of the investigative progress achieved over the reporting period, for which the Team is grateful.

9. During the reporting period, the Team was grateful to receive extrabudgetary support provided to advance many of the investigative and thematic priorities from Denmark, France, India and Slovakia.

#### **Development and use of chemical and biological weapons by ISIL**

10. Investigations into the development and use of chemical and biological weapons by ISIL generated significant insights during the reporting period, contributing to the development and finalization of a substantive case assessment. Through missions to relevant sites, engagement with affected communities and cooperation with Iraqi authorities, particularly the Central Investigative Court of Rusafah and the Investigative Court of Tazah Khurmatu, the Team collected and preserved substantial volumes of testimonial, digital and documentary evidence of crimes committed in relation to the production and use of chemical and biological weapons.

11. Evidentiary analysis was focused on the identification of suspects and investigative linkages, with an emphasis on geospatial analysis. The evidence collected was examined for further insights as to motivation and intent, including references to the ideology of ISIL and predecessor groups and evidence of internal

communications with a bearing upon the actions and objectives of the group. Efforts in this regard led to the identification of internal directives from leadership figures within the group, which regulated and incentivized the use of chemical weapons. Specifically, the examination of ISIL communications confirms direct involvement at the highest levels in the provision of specific financial rewards to ISIL forces deploying such weapons. ISIL records also depict a sophisticated system of internal control over the development and delivery of military material. Evidence also points to instrumental individuals being responsible for the development of specific chemical and biological capability, including but not limited to the use of sulphur mustard, chlorine, ricin and clostridium botulinum.

12. Furthermore, financial, commercial and public sector infrastructure was deliberately misappropriated by ISIL, including the University of Mosul, where a centre of operations to produce chemical weapons was established. Laboratories, specialized equipment, chemicals and other stores were seized and used by teams of scientific experts working for ISIL to develop sulphur mustard, ricin and chlorine. Certain testimonial evidence suggests ISIL interest in developing anthrax. The production methods employed by scientists were also reviewed, including accounts of experimentation on detainees in order to test agents to determine lethal dosages.

13. Investigations into the deployment of chemical weapons by ISIL to attack Tazah Khurmatu on 8 March 2016 revealed increasing numbers of potential victims, and extensive property and environmental damage. Testimonial evidence, medical records and clinical admissions data further contain acute signs and symptoms among victims, consistent with exposure to a chemical agent. Longer-term consequences of the use of chemical weapons in the vicinity remain under investigation, with ongoing health complications noted among residents, including accounts of chronic diseases and cancer, miscarriages, stillbirths and birth defects.

14. In the next phase of the investigation, the Team intends to look more closely at the underlying procurement system used by ISIL for these weapons. The analysis of the production, processes and standards of the chemical and biological weapons programme will continue along with a deeper analysis of the specific individuals linked thereto, including those involved in the administration of test doses of agents on detained persons.

### **Crimes committed against the Christian community**

15. During the reporting period, the Team concentrated its efforts on investigating the takeover by ISIL of three Christian towns located in the Ninawa plains, namely, Qaraqosh, Karamlays and Bartalah, on 6 August 2014. The Team worked on reviewing ISIL propaganda to identify digital and documentary material showing ISIL attacks against Christians and churches in those three towns, obtaining tactical and operational military information relating to the ISIL attack on the Ninawa plains. The Team further identified the leadership and structure of the ISIL group responsible for the attack, and developed an order of battle report for the ISIL attack on the aforementioned towns.

16. Furthermore, the evidence base for the investigations into the crimes committed against the Christian community was significantly expanded during the reporting period through face-to-face interviews and screenings with survivors of ISIL crimes. Those developments have enabled the Team to gather testimonial evidence regarding socially sensitive topics such as the commission of sexual violence against, and the enslavement of members of, the Christian community by ISIL, as well as regarding forcible religious conversions. The Team implemented a survivor-centred approach and gave special consideration to integrating a gender perspective throughout the

investigation process, which allowed it to reach survivors of sexual and gender-based and other vulnerable survivors, despite challenging social constraints.

17. In parallel, the Team regularly visited several priority crime locations, namely, Qaraqosh, Karamlays, Bartalah, Mosul and Nimrud, where it engaged with the community and local religious leaders. That engagement has strengthened outreach and cooperation with highly regarded individuals within the Christian community, allowing for access to a greater number of Christian survivors of ISIL crimes, and has enabled the Team to gather new evidence relating to the destruction of Christian cultural and religious heritage sites and personal property, as well as to corroborate existing evidence in that regard.

18. With regard to cultural and religious heritage, the evidence gathered showed that ISIL destroyed, burned and, in some cases, utilized key Christian religious sites in the Ninawa plains and Mosul for their own purposes, as military training centres and as courts and hospitals. Those religious sites include Al-Tahira church and Mar Gorgis church in Qaraqosh, Santa Barbara Church/Monastery in Karamlesh, Mart Shmoni Church in Bartalah, Mar Bahnam and Mart Sarah Monastery in Khidr Ilyas, and Al-Tahira Chaldean church in Mosul, in addition to numerous other churches and religious sites. The evidence also supported the conclusion that ISIL deliberately targeted Christian symbols and icons such as crosses and statues of religious figures, as well as Christian scripture present at those sites. In many instances, ISIL left graffiti on the walls which used derogatory language specifically aimed at the Christian community.

19. The Team has also continued to dedicate considerable efforts towards the collation and review of digital and documentary evidence in its holdings to identify gaps remaining within the investigation. UNITAD identified evidence and information such as publications, public speeches and fatwas that were indicative of ISIL intent towards Christians, including internal directives that sanctioned the systematic targeting of Christians, their religious sites and their property. That information has enabled the Team to strategically focus on obtaining new evidence that is expected to bridge the gaps identified. In the same manner, the Team strengthened its relationship with both international and local interlocutors who were involved at an early stage in gathering testimonial, documentary and digital evidence that records the experience of the Christian community under ISIL occupation.

20. Evidence collected by the Team thus far has strengthened its preliminary findings that ISIL committed acts that potentially constitute international crimes against the Christian community in Iraq. The international crimes include, but are not limited to, the forcible transfer of populations, persecution, pillage, sexual violence and slavery, other inhumane acts such as forced religious conversions, as well as the intentional destruction of cultural heritage. Moving forward, the Team will be focused on identifying priority persons of interest who were directly implicated in the commission of these international crimes.

#### **Crimes committed in and around Tikrit**

21. During the reporting period, the Team focused on advancing the investigation into the crimes committed by ISIL against the civilian population of Tikrit and Alam. Key ISIL members, who were alleged to have played a prominent role in harassing, abusing and terrorizing the civilian population of those areas, have been identified. The collection and analysis of evidence regarding the mass killing of unarmed cadets and military personnel from Tikrit Air Academy in June 2014 continued. One priority area of the Team in this regard has been establishing additional links between that event and additional crimes committed in the Tikrit area.



22. Evidence collected to date indicates that, during the occupation of Tikrit and Alam between June 2014 and March 2015, ISIL systematically targeted those belonging – or perceived as belonging – to groups either opposing, not supporting, or not aligning themselves with ISIL ideology. Those groups included members of the Shia community, members of governmental authorities, such as employees of civilian institutions and their relatives, members of specific tribes, and those who had assisted the cadets and military personnel of Tikrit Air Academy. They were subjected to, inter alia, public executions, mistreatment, arbitrary detention, hostage-taking, persecution, pillaging of private and public property and the destruction of public property and of religious sites. The ensuing climate of uncertainty and terror led many civilians to flee to government-controlled areas.

23. Through testimonial evidence, the Team identified ISIL militia men who were in positions of authority in the areas of Tikrit and Alam at the time these crimes were committed or who were identified as direct perpetrators of the crimes committed. Evidence suggests a significant overlap between ISIL members suspected of having taken part in the massacre of Tikrit Air Academy cadets and military personnel and of targeting civilians in Tikrit and Alam.

24. Continued engagement with national authorities, particularly the Central Investigative Court of Rusafah and the Investigative Court of Salah al-Din, as well as with local communities, remains key to the investigation. That cooperation is particularly important for the collection of additional, up-to-date information and evidence, especially regarding the official number and identification of victims of the massacre of cadets and military personnel from Tikrit Air Academy. Such evidence will allow the Team to further analyse the crimes committed and their legal characterization.

#### **Crimes committed against the Sunni community**

25. The Team advanced in its investigation of the crimes committed against the Sunni community, notably those against the Albu Nimr tribe who were targeted by ISIL because of their opposition to the group and proximity with Iraqi security forces. An increasingly comprehensive picture is developing of the two main incidents under investigation, namely, the execution of 15 members of the tribe near a sink hole in the Tharthar desert, and the execution of around 48 members of the tribe at the road intersection in the Bakr neighbourhood of Hit, both of which took place in October 2014. Support from the Investigative Court of Karkh in Baghdad and the Central Investigative Court in Ramadi has been essential to advancing these investigative lines of inquiry.

26. Investigations have also allowed the Team to identify numerous additional incidents in which hundreds of members of the tribe were executed in separate events, mainly towards the end of 2014, in the area between Hit, Ramadi and Lake Tharthar in Anbar Governorate, notably the execution of 15 members of the police from Jami'ah police station in Hit. Witness testimony has also allowed the team to identify several other mass graves of Albu Nimr members executed by ISIL in the area. The Team is also collecting information on crimes against other members of the Sunni community in Anbar, including members of other tribes, as its investigation expands. A local town hall meeting held in Anbar in November 2021, co-hosted by the Governor, and attended by local authorities and representatives of affected communities, helped in this regard, enabling the Team to engage with tribal leaders and civil society representatives who have demonstrated a keen interest in providing information and referring numerous victims and potential witnesses of ISIL crimes. The support of tribal leaders and their knowledge of crime incidents, sites, witnesses and perpetrators is crucial and has enabled new lines of investigation.

27. The Team has carried out several witness interviews, including of family members of victims and community leaders, who have provided new evidentiary material including videos, photos and ISIL documents. Biographical data of ISIL members from Anbar and witness testimonies collected earlier by Iraqi authorities were received by the Team. Additional evidence was obtained through open-source research, including through the use of social media and satellite imagery. The collection of documents published by ISIL allowed the Team to start building a more comprehensive picture of ISIL command structures in the area and time period under investigation and to establish individual responsibility of perpetrators involved in specific crimes against Sunnis in Anbar.

28. Current efforts include further interviews of key witnesses, such as survivors and eyewitnesses to specific crimes. In addition, an agreement with key civil society partners is being explored, which could provide a framework for the acquisition of further information and evidence collected by local non-governmental organizations. Despite significant security challenges, the Team is planning to carry out field visits to engage with affected communities and inspect key areas where crimes took place and where mass graves were identified.

### **Crimes committed against Kaka'i, Shabak and Shia Turkmen communities**

29. The Team continued its analysis in relation to crimes committed by ISIL against Shabak, Kaka'i and Shia Turkmen communities in Iraq, including with regard to specific attacks against minority cultural heritage sites and campaigns of killing and enforced disappearance specifically targeting community members.

30. The Team collected additional testimonial evidence and continued to pursue leads in relation to suspected ISIL perpetrators linked to specific events. A significant number of additional survivors and witnesses have been identified by the Team, which initiated screenings and initial assessment for those with information of potential relevance to prioritized lines of inquiry. This expansion and deepening of the evidence base concerning crimes committed against the Shia Turkmen community was achieved through conducting a number of missions across Kirkuk and Ninawa Governorates to obtain physical and testimonial evidence from survivors and witnesses.

31. The collection of documentary evidence also expanded in relation to crimes against minority communities, with a specific focus on the collection and analysis of judicial files and civil society documentation in coordination with Iraqi authorities and judges in Kirkuk Governorate. As a result, hundreds of pages of documentary evidence from the Investigative Court of Tazah Khurmatu have been preserved. An additional number of previously concealed spiritual sites ("*Jamkhana*") of the Kaka'i community in Ninawa were also reported to UNITAD for the first time. Through its ongoing community engagement strategies, the Team maintained engagement and community confidence, with the newly reported sites now included in the substantive analysis.

32. The Team also undertook an extensive document review programme, using UNITAD evidence management tools, to identify and analyse internal records, communications and directives of ISIL pertaining to the commission of crimes specifically against minorities.

### **Crimes committed against the Yazidi community**

33. UNITAD has collected additional evidence which has been used to enhance the case brief with respect to attacks committed by ISIL against the Yazidi community in Sinjar, closing specific evidentiary gaps at priority sites, including Kuju, Solagh, the southern slopes of Mount Sinjar and the northern district of Sinjar. The evidence has

strengthened the initial findings of the Team that these attacks constituted war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. The Team has also further developed its understanding of the ISIL perpetrator network which was behind the Sinjar attack and strengthened the cases against the key individual perpetrators identified as responsible for the attack on Sinjar and the subsequent killings, enslavement and other crimes committed against the Yazidi population of Sinjar.

34. The DNA identification of the victims of the Kuju and Solagh massacres has continued, with the human remains of an additional 41 individuals having been returned to their families on 9 December 2021 as part of a ceremony supported by the Team, which was conducted in accordance with Yazidi custom and religious practices.

35. Through the geographic expansion of these investigations, the Team has collected additional testimonial, documentary and digital evidence which has established the nature and scale of crimes committed against the Yazidi population of the northern and southern parts of Sinjar. Investigating crimes committed in Hardan was a high priority during the reporting period. With a view to securing forensic evidence capable of corroborating evidentiary material already collected in the Hardan-related line of inquiry, the Team has provided in-depth support to Iraqi authorities in completing the excavation of three mass graves around Hardan junction. The excavation process began on 21 February and was completed on 7 March. Further investigative work is necessary following the preliminary forensic findings relating to the date of the deposition of the bodies.

36. With respect to its investigations into crimes committed in Sinjar, the Team has expanded the number of perpetrators identified to 2,326 and is currently reviewing the database in relation to some 152 foreign fighters who have been identified, as well as a dozen other priority perpetrators. In-depth case files have been developed in relation to eight primary persons of interest, which will be further elaborated upon in the next reporting period. In prioritizing the case-building of individual perpetrators, the Team is consulting with Iraqi authorities, including Kurdish entities such as the Commission for Investigation and Gathering Evidence, as well as with other Member States who are engaged in investigating and prosecuting ISIL perpetrators for their involvement in war crimes, crimes against humanity or genocide.

37. In parallel to the above-mentioned activities, the Team has diversified its lines of inquiry with respect to investigations into crimes committed against the Yazidi population in and around Tall Afar, including the mass killing of the Yazidi male captives who had been forcefully converted to Islam and were living together with their Yazidi families in captivity in and around Tall Afar until the end of April 2015, when an order was issued to separate those families. After their separation, the women and girls were sold or given to ISIL members and subjected to sexual violence and other types of abuse. The boys were taken to the battlefields and approximately 400 to 500 Yazidi men were killed and their bodies reportedly thrown in the Bir Aloo Antar sink hole, north of Tall Afar. The separation and subsequent killing of the men took place on or around 26 April 2015, following an order from the highest level of ISIL leadership, after several Yazidi captives had tried or managed to escape. Over and above the bodies of those Yazidi men, it is expected that the bodies of persons of other ethnicities, including the Shia and Sunni communities, were thrown into the sink hole by ISIL.

38. At present, the Team is also focusing on ISIL leadership and the hierarchical structure in Tall Afar, given that the ISIL base in Tall Afar played a central role in the killing of individuals at Bir Aloo Antar, as well as in other crimes committed against the Yazidi population of Sinjar, including the organization of the sexual slavery of the Yazidi women and girls, the training of Yazidi boys and adolescent males in the use of weapons, the launch of the attack on Sinjar and the subsequent killing of Yazidis who

were trying to escape on 3 August 2014 and the days thereafter. The Team is reviewing its holdings in order to fully determine which ISIL leaders had the most responsibility in Tal Afar. It has also identified several key witnesses and sources to further shed light on the senior leadership and key ISIL perpetrators who were operational in Tall Afar.

#### **Mass executions at Badush prison, north-west of Mosul**

39. The investigation into the mass execution of detainees at Badush prison on 10 June 2014 continued during the reporting period. Additional victims and witnesses have been screened and interviewed, which allowed the Team to gather more information on the event that targeted several hundreds of prisoners, predominantly Shia, in several locations. Even though the total number of victims remains uncertain, the investigative work undertaken over the past months has confirmed that approximately 1,000 Shia prisoners were executed by ISIL during the attack. The Team continues to gather and analyse anti-Shia hate speech and ISIL doctrine-related data to better understand and explain the motive behind the attack by ISIL on Badush prison and its Shia prisoners.

40. The Team worked in close cooperation with the Mass Graves Directorate of Iraq of the Martyrs Foundation, which allowed it to conclude the excavation of the Badush Valley mass grave located only a few kilometres away from the prison, where 600 predominantly Shia prisoners were executed. The analysis of the extensive number of human remains and associated evidence recovered from these mass grave crime scenes is ongoing. Despite some security concerns, efforts are also under way to locate other mass grave sites identified by survivors, which contain the remaining prisoners. Cooperation with the Medico-Legal Directorate of the Ministry of Health also allowed the Team to advance the identification of victims' family members through DNA testing, which is still in its initial phase. Recent engagement with the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights in Mosul should also allow the identification of additional victims and family members lined to Badush prison.

41. The Team continued to engage with the Counter-Terrorism Court of Ninawa in that investigation, particularly in identifying the perpetrators of the massacre, including those currently in custody.

### **B. Specialized thematic units: mainstreaming expertise on key aspects of investigations**

42. In parallel with the core investigative work of its field investigation units, the Team has continued to build its capacity in specialized cross-sectional areas, ensuring that investigative activities are conducted in line with international standards.

#### **Sexual and gender-based crimes and crimes against children**

43. The Team has significantly advanced its investigations into sexual and gender-based crimes committed by ISIL. During the reporting period, the Team conducted a considerable number of detailed interviews with Yazidi women and girls who were sexually enslaved and who, in addition to providing information on the slave trade, were able to provide valuable information regarding the perpetrators, including foreign terrorist fighters. The latter has proved particularly relevant for national jurisdictions that are conducting their own investigations into crimes allegedly committed by those individuals. For the first time, the Team also conducted interviews with elderly Yazidi women who were enslaved, including by being forced to perform manual and agricultural labour, but not subjected to sexual violence. This information broadens the scope of gender-based crimes and the understanding of the different ways in which Yazidi women were affected because of their gender outside

the context of sexual crimes. This also confirms that, after gender, age was the main factor that ISIL used to determine whom to target for sexual violence. Elderly women, whom the group saw as lacking in “sexual value”, were targeted only for labour.

44. During the reporting period, the Team also identified and conducted screenings with Shia Turkmen female survivors of sexual violence, including girls as young as 11, who were separated from their families and forced to marry ISIL fighters and sexually abused as result. Because of the stigma associated with sexual violence, the identification of these witnesses took a considerable amount of time, while the full, forthcoming interviews themselves will require particular expertise.

45. In the context of its investigation into crimes against children, interviews were conducted with Shia Turkmen boys who were conscripted by ISIL, which allowed for the identification of training and military camps and of perpetrators. More broadly, a thorough assessment of all available information on crimes against children was conducted to map out crime patterns and potential leads for future investigations. In this context, the Team identified specific avenues of inquiry for crimes against children from a variety of communities, including the Christian and Sunni communities, among which the enlistment of Sunni boys, who were particularly targeted by ISIL propaganda seeking to attract them to its ranks.

46. As previously reported, the Team has also started an investigation into crimes committed by ISIL against the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer community. The social sensitivities of the topic, coupled with the security concerns of members of the community, present significant challenges for the documentation of these crimes. Investigative activities have nevertheless been conducted, including witness interviews, which materialized largely thanks to the cooperation from civil society organizations. Given that many of the executions of people perceived as being members of this community took place in Mosul in 2015 and 2016, the Team is now focusing its efforts on this specific geographical and temporal scope.

### **Financing of ISIL crimes**

47. Investigations into the central treasury of ISIL, Bayt al-Mal (“house of money”), continued during the reporting period, with an initial draft case assessment nearing completion. Initial findings of this assessment to articulate how Bayt al-Mal provided vital material and financial support for the group, including managing the payments from Diwan al-Jund (the group’s ministry of the army) and specifically those units within the Diwan that have been found to have committed international crimes. Overall, the treasury was fundamental to the day-to-day operations of ISIL, and central to the implementation of its objectives, including the management of wealth and establishment of a specialized financial system that enabled the group to conduct financial transactions and trades on a large scale.

48. Evidence has shown linkages between Bayt al-Mal and certain money service businesses, including those that provided significant support to the group. The Team has also catalogued more evidence on the material support provided by banks, notably those taken over by ISIL, and through money transfers (*hawalas*), especially in Mosul, to Bayt al-Mal and to the organization more broadly. Bayt al-Mal maintained control of the local financial services sector, thereby enabling its economic operations, including the conduct of transactions and other financial activity locally and globally by ISIL members and leadership.

49. Both the Investigative Court in Karkh and the Counter-Terrorism Court of Ninawa are critical partners for the Team and have made significant contributions in support of these investigations. Likewise, the Team remains committed to the provision of additional strategic reports to counterparts in the Iraqi judiciary, addressing the functioning of Bayt al-Mal among other topics relating to ISIL financing.

50. In support of this investigation, the Team has continued to collect remittance transaction data related to those money service businesses and other economic entities that operated in Mosul under ISIL, including gold dealers, travel agencies and stored-value payment card operators. Swathes of ISIL administrative documents have been forensically examined and the Team continued to collect testimonial evidence from those who have first-hand knowledge of ISIL financial activities.

51. In pursuit of more critical financial evidence to further determine the scope of the financial dimensions of the international crimes committed by ISIL in Iraq, the Team has sought dialogue with Member States who have been affected by criminal activities relating to the global financing of ISIL. The Team also continues to build cooperation with the banking sector and larger international financial services sector. Recognizing that the financial dimensions of war crimes is a topic not typically included in the global anti-money laundering and counter-terrorism financing framework, it further continues to build awareness around this type of international criminality, so that financial and economic actors may become more obvious subjects of interest in the wider global accountability framework for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.

### **C. Composition and facilities of the Investigative Team**

52. The Team now benefits from a total of 254 personnel, including 174 staff members. Ensuring gender and geographical balance has remained a priority, including gender balance in senior management positions in the Team, with women presently accounting for 50 per cent of substantive and support staff. All regional groupings of the United Nations continue to be represented in the Team.

53. An extensive workforce planning exercise was concluded within the reporting period that mapped the current workforce of the Team and their skills, identified future skills demands, and triggered discussions as to how to best bridge gaps within the existing staffing structure and/or through additional, extrabudgetary support. The exercise has also taken into consideration non-staff personnel and staff hired through extrabudgetary funding, which the Team considered essential to have included in an expanded version of the gender parity statistics. To that end, the Team has progressed significantly in achieving gender parity for posts funded through extrabudgetary funding, and at present, 60 per cent of all such posts funded from extrabudgetary resources are occupied by women. Gender parity continues to be promoted across all parts of the Team's structure through the gender parity working group, which addresses gender-related issues with regard to recruitment, staff retention and the overall working environment.

54. In consultation with the Government of Iraq, the number of national experts appointed to the Team has further increased. By using extrabudgetary funding and filling remaining regular budget posts, it is anticipated that 6 additional national experts will shortly be appointed, taking the total number of Iraqi national experts serving with the Team to 27.

55. The Team returned to a normal staffing footprint in Iraq and usual in-person working modalities at the end of 2021. This has been supported through measures including providing staff with access to coronavirus disease (COVID-19) vaccines and booster shots in Iraq, in close collaboration with the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and the Government of Iraq.

#### **Provision of expert personnel by Member States**

56. Member States have continued their support to the Team through the provision of expert personnel in accordance with paragraph 14 of Security Council resolution

2379 (2017). At the time of writing, there are a total of 10 experts provided by the national authorities of Egypt, Germany, Jordan, the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia and Sweden. Previous contributions of expert personnel have also been provided by Australia and Finland. These significant contributions from Member States have also contributed towards the geographic diversity of its staffing composition.

57. The Investigative Team continues to welcome the nomination of national experts by Member States for secondment in support of its work. A call for nominations will be circulated in June to launch a new campaign for the recruitment of expert personnel to a range of roles that are viewed as particularly critical in supporting field investigations, the analysis and exploitation of evidence, the use of eDiscovery software, and forensic science.

### **III. Investigative activities: collection and storage of evidentiary material**

58. The first half of 2022 saw a full-scale return to regular field-based activities at an even greater frequency compared with pre-pandemic levels. Support from Iraqi national authorities, non-governmental organizations and local community partners has been critical in absorbing this surge in activity. These partnerships, paired with advanced technological tools, have helped the Team to significantly expand its evidence holdings.

#### **A. Documentary, testimonial and digital evidence collection**

59. The collection of documentary evidence by the Team is driven by the need for a comprehensive, continuous and coherent approach to the landscape of potentially relevant evidentiary material. This has involved the implementation of activities to identify and preserve government and civil society collections of evidence and convert them into usable digital formats, including through major evidence digitization projects being conducted together with the Iraqi judiciary, Iraqi security services and the Kurdistan Regional Government.

60. To date, the Team has preserved and converted into usable digital formats a total of over 4.5 million physical pages of documentary evidence at courts across Iraq, in line with international standards. This effort has included the subsequent acquisition of digital copies of priority case files from courts in Baghdad and Mosul. At present, the Team is supporting the digitization of significant volumes of documentary materials on a daily basis, all of which had previously been available only in perishable paper format and were at serious risk of degradation or loss.

61. The Team has also begun to apply rigorous investigative and analytical approaches to large-scale collections of documentary evidence. During the reporting period, the Team undertook a detailed round of assessment missions throughout Iraq and the Kurdistan Region to update its understanding of the extent and nature of potentially available and relevant materials, and to more effectively and efficiently screen the evidence held by government entities and civil society actors. The result of that assessment is a picture of evidentiary holdings that is greater in volume than was previously understood. Iraqi courts alone, for example, hold active and closed ISIL and terrorism-related case files totalling more than 20 million pages.

62. Another result of this updated assessment exercise is that it has reinforced the Team's understanding that collections of documentary evidence contain multiple media formats, including information stored online and in various types of electronic devices. Paper records remain the largest source of potential evidence by physical

volume, and the Team has made significant progress in enabling access to that complex store of information. It is anticipated that by the end of 2022, for example, the Team will have supported the digitization of more than half the total estimated number of pages of available paper documentary evidence in Iraq. The Team is grateful for the financial contribution of the European Union in support of that effort.

63. In parallel, and in cooperation with Iraqi authorities, the Team continued to work with evidence obtained from seized digital devices recovered from the battlefield. During the reporting period, several devices were identified for targeted analysis because of the large number of files and media stored on them. The data ultimately retrieved included ISIL photos, videos, official documents, weaponry, maps with marked locations and screenshots of conversations in instant messaging applications, all of which will allow the Team to continue with linking ISIL members to crime scenes and the commission of international crimes. The Team continues to address the challenge of scalability when dealing with large volumes of data and has developed a methodology for instantly filtering, segmenting and analysing the data to provide an insight into artefacts that would remain invisible during a manual search.

64. Online investigations, utilizing advanced open-source intelligence techniques and following international forensic best practice, continue to yield significant information that is pertinent to the Team and its work. A dedicated solution has been developed in-house to deal with the variety of sources containing non-Latin characters, the large amount of web-based evidence in need of collection, the volatility of web-based evidence in general, and the absence of a single industry-based solution to preserve these types of web-based evidence. The solution is designed to automate the collection of data from the Internet in a forensically sound manner, addressing the challenge of consistently preserving large amounts of web-based data at speed.

65. In applying that technology, open-source investigations have led to the collection of additional temporal and spatial data from ISIL propaganda videos relating to the mass killing of unarmed cadets and military personnel of Tikrit Air Academy in June 2014, in addition to retrieving web-based information and evidence relating to acts of violence committed by ISIL against the civilian population in Tikrit and Alam. Analytical reports produced as a result of these enhanced collection methods have contributed to identifying potential new lines of inquiry and providing corroborative evidence for strengthening case briefs produced by the Team.

## **B. Excavation of mass graves and return of remains**

66. During the reporting period, the Team continued its support for the excavation of ISIL mass grave crime scenes in Iraq and the return of remains identified on the basis of DNA to their families for dignified burial, with field-based forensic excavation work conducted at several key sites. Forensic evidence obtained from such sites, combined with key visual assets such as three-dimensional mapping produced using terrestrial laser scans, continue to play an important role in corroborating testimonial and documentary evidence obtained by the Team. In addition, the Team has acted upon new information received to establish the location of potential new ISIL mass grave sites for forensic assessment. The Team wishes to recognize the extrabudgetary support from the United States of America that enables the implementation of this priority activity.

67. The strong engagement with and collaboration between the Mass Graves Directorate of the Martyrs Foundation and the Medico-Legal Directorate of the Ministry of Health remain the cornerstone of the Team's investigative work. The joint mass grave investigations strategy agreed between the Team and the Government of



Iraq, coupled with joint planning initiatives in late 2021, provided a clear framework and road map for the prioritization and implementation of excavation activities in 2022. During the reporting period, this common forensic strategy with the Government of Iraq was implemented successfully, with several key milestones accomplished.

68. Excavations at three mass grave locations at and around Hardan junction in Sinjar were completed in early March. Hardan junction is the alleged location of ISIL executions in August 2014 of members of the Yazidi community fleeing areas seized by ISIL. More than 50 bodies and multiple items of associated evidence were recovered at the site through the joint efforts of a team of field experts from the Mass Graves Directorate, the Medico-Legal Directorate and the Kurdistan Regional Government, notably from the Commission for Investigation and Gathering Evidence and the Ministry of Martyrs and Anfal Affairs. The Team continued its ongoing support for creating comprehensive three-dimensional maps throughout the excavation that, when combined with the detailed digital recording of human remains and evidence in situ being led by the Mass Graves Directorate, will enable the accurate digital reconstruction of the crime scene. Moreover, the detection of temporal change in the Hardan junction area through the exploitation of open-source dated satellite imagery, coupled with the real-time interrogation of the forensic landscape at the time of excavation, informed new lines of inquiry to be pursued by the Team.

69. Forensic archaeological excavations in Sinjar town of an additional three smaller grave sites relating to crimes committed against the Yazidi community were also concluded during the reporting period. This brings to 26 the number of grave sites holding Yazidi victims of ISIL investigated in close collaboration with the national authorities.

70. Forensic excavation work at Badush ravine relating to the execution of predominantly Shi'a prisoners from Badush prison continued in partnership with the Mass Graves Directorate and the Medico-Legal Directorate. A total of eight burial locations have been located and forensically excavated, with at least two locations having been determined to be primary execution and disposal sites, at this stage of the investigation. The analysis of the extensive number of human remains and associated evidence recovered from these mass grave crime scenes is ongoing. As a parallel undertaking, and in close collaboration with Iraqi authorities, the Team supported five outreach campaigns in the Governorates of Babil, Najaf, Karbala', Diwaniyah and Muthanna, enabling families of ISIL victims to come forward and contribute to the investigative effort through the formal registration of missing relatives from Badush prison and the provision of DNA reference samples to support the future identification and return of remains to the next of kin. The Team is grateful for the support of the respective governors for the conduct of these activities. Acting on intelligence shared by the national authorities, a joint assessment mission conducted with the Mass Graves Directorate and the Medico-Legal Directorate has yielded evidence of a new mass grave site located to the north of Mosul, possibly linked to the killing of Badush detainees in June 2014 given its proximity to the prison and the discovery of prisoners' uniforms in the mass grave.

71. Work to identify the victims in the mass grave sites previously excavated has continued, resulting in the DNA-based identification of 41 Yazidi victims during the reporting period, including 36 from Kuju village, of whom 16 were taken from the village in August 2014 and executed at the Solagh Institute several kilometres away. This brings the total number of victims from the Sinjar area identified using DNA-based methods to 145. The Team provided logistical and financial support for a commemorative ceremony held in Kuju on 9 December 2021 for the 41 individuals identified. In collaboration with non-governmental organizations, the Team deployed psychosocial experts on site at the burial ceremony to ensure the provision of effective

psychological and emotional support to survivors and the families of victims. During the period of mourning, an ante mortem data and DNA reference sample collection campaign led by the national authorities and supported by the Team was conducted, augmenting the data collection efforts of previous campaigns focused on the Yazidi community.

72. Engagement with all affected communities is central to the victim-centred approach of the Team in the investigation of ISIL crimes. This provides a critical pathway for informing communities about the scope and complexity of forensic mass grave investigations and about the availability of localized psychosocial support for victims and survivors, and also provides the opportunity to listen to the needs and requests of the community in the conduct of return of remains ceremonies and to reflect on lessons learned. Details regarding specific outreach events held during the reporting period are contained in section IV.

73. The Team has worked with the Medico-Legal Directorate in the implementation of a state-of-the-art software platform at their dedicated DNA identification laboratory. The platform will strengthen the capacity of the laboratory to undertake the robust, science-based identification of the remains of victims. Further details are provided in section IV.

### **C. Storage, analysis and management of evidence**

74. The Team continued to prioritize its data storage and processing capacity in order to effectively harness its rapidly expanding evidence holdings, in particular with respect to multimedia. Significant developments during the reporting period, made possible through extrabudgetary funding from Denmark, allowed the Team to utilize new technologies to accelerate the processing of its evidence holdings while gaining systematic and automatic insights into its data without human intervention.

75. The “Zeteo” project transitioned into full production mode, allowing the Team to gain an awareness of its digital evidence holdings through the use of machine translation, the generation of image insights, and advanced video and audio data processing. Prior to the project, the Team did not have the ability to quickly gain insight into the multimedia stored in its holdings. Since its launch, the Zeteo application has successfully processed and indexed over 1,223 hours, or two months’ worth, of video and audio evidence. This has resulted in the capture of more than 30,000 unique human faces for use in matching, which provides direct assistance in identifying evidence that is potentially relevant to ongoing lines of investigative inquiry. Using Zeteo, the Team has also begun to process and index its image- and photograph-based evidence consisting of approximately 850,000 files. This process generates a description of an image in human-readable language with complete sentences, providing the ability to identify highly relevant images.

76. In addition to Zeteo, the Team has procured and successfully put into full production two software applications, Rampiva and Passware. Rampiva is an eDiscovery workflow automation suite that has increased the data-processing throughput of the Team by more than 350 per cent. Within three months of its implementation, the software allowed the Team to clear the backlog of evidence to be processed and drastically reduced the time required from evidence collection to review, with the result that collected evidence is available to reviewers and analysts in a matter of days rather than weeks. Passware is a password- and encryption-cracking solution that includes a server containing 12 graphics processing units that is running decryption software to attempt to crack computer files at a rate of more than 250,000 passwords per second, enabling access to some encrypted ISIL files of high evidentiary value.

## **IV. Delivering accountability in collaboration with national actors**

77. The effective delivery of the mandate of the Team continues to be founded on close partnerships with national actors across Iraq. During the reporting period, the Team further strengthened its relationship with national authorities, religious leaders, non-governmental organizations and other entities.

### **A. Engagement and cooperation with the Government of Iraq, including with the Kurdistan Regional Government**

78. During the reporting period, the Special Adviser prioritized regular engagement with senior components of the Government of Iraq, including the Office of the Prime Minister, the Presidency, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the National Security Advisory Council, to strengthen the common partnership between the two sides. In those consultations, the Special Adviser underlined the need for continued support for the Team and for progress towards delivering on the collective objective of international-standard trials reflecting the scale and nature of crimes committed by ISIL against the people of Iraq. In addition, the Special Adviser held regular meetings with the Chief Justice and Head of the Supreme Judicial Council, underlying the close cooperation with the Iraqi judiciary. He also met with the heads of the Investigative Court of Karkh, the Central Investigative Court of Rusafah and the Counter-Terrorism Court of Ninawa to thank them for their support for the investigative work of the Team and discuss further avenues of practical cooperation.

79. The National Coordinating Committee, chaired by the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, continued to play an important role in helping to facilitate the work of the Team in line with the common strategic frameworks agreed during previous reporting periods. In January 2022, the Committee and members of the Team, led by the Committee Chair and the Special Adviser, respectively, held a workshop in Erbil to reflect on cooperation and define common areas of priority for the future. This included significant outcomes in terms of information-sharing; the capacity-building of national authorities; the organization of events to promote cooperation and the efforts of Iraq with respect to ISIL accountability; operational cooperation in the areas of mass grave excavations; the return of identified victim remains; victim identification campaigns; and the digitization and archiving of evidence. Currently, the Team and the Committee hold joint meetings each month to review progress on the priorities agreed at the workshop.

80. In particular, the Team appreciated the continuous cooperation of the representatives of the Kurdistan Regional Government. The Special Adviser held a productive meeting with the Minister of Interior of the Kurdistan Region during the reporting period, expressing his appreciation for the important contributions of the Ministry to the work of the Team, and in particular the Office of Rescued Yazidi Affairs and the Commission for Investigation and Gathering Evidence. The Team remains regularly engaged with the Office of the Coordinator for International Advocacy of the Kurdistan Regional Government and is particularly grateful for its daily support in facilitating the strategic and operational cooperation between the Team and Kurdistan Region authorities. The Team also wishes to express its appreciation for the support received from the Head of the High Judicial Council of the Kurdistan Region.

81. In terms of cooperation with the Government of Iraq, the Special Adviser placed particular emphasis on improving information-sharing during the reporting period, consistent with the terms of reference. Accordingly, the Team has sought to expand and

deepen pre-existing arrangements made with select members of the Iraqi judiciary in 2021 that allowed for the sharing of information relevant to financial crimes committed in connection with ISIL activities in Iraq. Key findings of its investigations into the crimes against the Yazidi community and Tikrit Air Academy personnel were presented to members of the National Coordinating Committee, initiating a series of sessions planned by the Team to better convey the results of its investigative work. Finally, the Team is working closely with the National Security Advisory Council to conclude an arrangement that would enable the Team to share information in support of the development of application packages by Iraq to have individuals added to Security Council sanctions listings, and in support of asset freezing at the domestic level.

## **B. Strengthening the capacity of Iraqi authorities**

82. The Team continued to expand its efforts to share knowledge and provide technical assistance to Iraqi authorities in accordance with paragraph 39 of the terms of reference. The assistance has spanned several key areas, including mass grave site excavations, the digitization of evidence and evidence preservation, and forensic reporting techniques.

83. A defining achievement during the reporting period was the donation of a laboratory information system with DNA matching software to the DNA identification laboratory of the Medico-Legal Directorate, the culmination of a collaboration that began in May 2021 and the result of the constructive partnership between the scientists in the DNA laboratory and the forensic experts on the Team. The software solution represents the single largest donation to the Iraqi authorities by the Team and enhances their ability to perform DNA matches at scale and accelerate the return of identified remains to their next of kin. This has been complemented by an extensive training programme, with the first round of training delivered in February and March and training in DNA matching and software customization set for the next reporting period. DNA scientists at the Medico-Legal Directorate were the driving force behind the implementation of this initiative, the need for which they had identified on the basis of their understanding of the scale of the challenge to scientifically identify the victims of ISIL crimes in Iraq.

84. As referenced in section III, the Team has continued to help national authorities with the forensic excavation of ISIL mass grave crime scenes in Iraq. Forensic specialists on the Team continue to deploy and mentor Iraqi counterparts in the conduct of mass grave excavations, supported by routine planning and briefing sessions for each mass grave investigation. This continuous dialogue promotes real-time information-sharing, enhancing the collective understanding and interpretation of these types of crime scenes and ensuring the alignment of the activities of the national authorities with the investigative priorities of the Team. Furthermore, the Team provides sustained logistical and financial support for the targeted collection of data on missing persons, a necessary adjunct for contextualizing the elements of the crimes committed and contributing to the timely scientific identification of the bodies recovered from ISIL mass graves.

85. With respect to the preservation of documentary evidence held by Iraqi authorities and its conversion into usable digital formats, as also reflected in section III of the present report, the Team has significantly expanded the types of support that it provides to Iraqi authorities, including those of the Kurdistan Region. In line with the strategic plan agreed with the Supreme Judicial Council, the Team is now actively supporting the Iraqi judiciary in preserving and converting into usable digital formats ISIL-related judicial case files in eight priority courts. Those efforts have notably included direct in-house support for field investigations, such as in the production of digital surrogates of medical reports and witness statements shared by the

Investigative Court of Tazah Khurmatu in connection with the chemical weapons attack carried out by ISIL. The Investigative Court of Karkh, the Central Investigative Court of Rusafah and the Counter-Terrorism Court of Ninawa have all reported significant time savings and staff efficiencies in their ability to expedite the retrieval of digitized case files.

86. Through effective coordination with the National Coordinating Committee and the National Security Advisory Council, digitization support has also been extended to relevant Iraqi security services. Moreover, the Team successfully delivered evidence management training to 25 Iraqi government and security service representatives at the Al-Nahrain Centre for Strategic Studies in Baghdad. In the Kurdistan Region, the Team has worked with eight local authorities to support the development of standard operating procedures with respect to the identification, preparation, transfer, receipt and processing of records. This collaboration was previously achieved through the completion of initial digitization work at the Commission for Investigation and Gathering Evidence in Dohuk, work that has since been performed by the Ministry of Interior of the Kurdistan Regional Government in Erbil. Records from the Office of Rescued Yazidi Affairs were also digitized, and the Team is currently assisting the Ministry of Interior in its efforts to process digital records of the Asayish.

87. Building upon the delivery of hands-on training in digital forensics and enhanced open-source investigation techniques to Iraqi authorities in Mosul, the Team has augmented its support through the donation of specialized equipment and the provision of workplace mentoring to establish digital forensics capacity at the Counter-Terrorism Court of Ninawa. The initiative serves as a sustainable solution to support the forensic acquisition of digital and open-source evidence by national authorities, in addition to securing the broadest possible usability and admissibility of the evidence in fair and independent criminal proceedings through the application of international standards of forensic best practice. The success of the pilot project has given impetus to the expansion of this training and mentoring programme to Iraqi authorities at three additional locations in Baghdad during the next reporting period, together with the donation of the requisite specialized equipment to ensure longer-term sustainability.

88. Support for Iraqi investigative judges and investigators in the development of case files for the prosecution of ISIL members for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide continued in the reporting period, reflecting the previous agreement with the Supreme Judicial Council. The Team works regularly with the Investigative Court of Karkh, the Central Investigative Court of Rusafah, the Counter-Terrorism Court of Ninawa and the Commission for Investigation and Gathering Evidence on the identification of key perpetrator candidates for case-building and the preparation of three specific case files that reflect their investigative focus and the independent investigative results of the Team. Recognizing that the work of the Team is rapidly shifting from structural investigations to the development of case files against perpetrators, the Special Adviser established a dedicated case-building unit within the Team to facilitate and increase capacity in support of this priority and specific area of cooperation with the Iraqi judiciary. The Team appreciates the extrabudgetary support from Denmark to help advance this work.

89. The Team has also continued its support with respect to the establishment of a dedicated witness protection department within the Government of Iraq. At the request of the National Coordinating Committee and the Ministry of Interior, and in close coordination with the department, the Team developed a five-day pilot witness protection train-the-trainer course during the reporting period that is slated for delivery in June 2022. The Team is in discussions with the Kurdistan Regional Government regarding the delivery of a similar witness protection capacity-building course tailored to its authorities as well.

90. At the request of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Team has developed a three-phase training programme covering basic psychosocial skills, programme management and train-the-trainer skills, targeting up to 80 social workers and psychologists in the Psychosocial Department and the Women's Social Welfare and Protection Department. Training started during the reporting period and is scheduled to be completed by December 2022. Furthermore, at the request of the Ministry of Justice, the Team is in the process of developing a package for training prison staff working with such detainees in psychosocial support.

91. The Team wishes to recognize Finland and the Netherlands for their extrabudgetary contributions to the work of the Team in the areas of witness protection and psychosocial support.

### **C. Working in partnership with all elements of Iraqi society**

92. To ensure that its investigative work is informed by the knowledge and experience of all affected communities in Iraq, the Team has continued to prioritize its engagement with religious actors, survivor groups, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community leaders.

93. In line with the victim-centred approach of UNITAD, two outreach events were held in the Kurdistan Region in November, prior to the second return of identified Yazidi remains to Kuju village, Sinjar, on 9 December 2021. The first outreach event, which was held in Qadiya camp, where many relatives of the Kuju victims reside, allowed the Yazidi community to learn more about the identification process and address any concerns they had. The second outreach event connected Yazidi representatives, civil society organizations and other key actors with the relevant national authorities and UNITAD representatives. The Special Adviser took part in the commemorative event held in Kuju to honour the return of the identified remains of 41 Yazidi victims in a burial ceremony. The outreach events in preparation of the burial ceremony enabled Yazidi women to call for a more prominent presence at the cemetery, resulting in specific provisions being made to ensure that they were seated centrally at the ceremony and took an active role in the community-led event. Furthermore, outreach activities to connect with affected Yazidi and other communities in additional internally displaced persons camps in the Kurdistan Region were conducted in April 2022 to ensure a continuum of engagement with all those affected by ISIL crimes. UNITAD is grateful for the continued support of the Kurdish authorities in this regard.

94. The Team continues to work closely with a wide range of civil society actors, including international and local non-governmental organizations, in line with the operational needs of different UNITAD investigative teams and relevant non-governmental organizations. During the reporting period, the Team completed a detailed mapping exercise, identifying key non-governmental organizations that are in possession of documentary and battlefield evidence that is yet to be incorporated into the evidence holdings of the Team. In an initial operational step based on this analysis, the Team has concluded an arrangement that will allow for the transfer of 22,000 survivor and witness statements to the Team in the next reporting period. The Team has also put initial plans in place to conduct a similar exercise with civil society organizations that is focused on documenting the destruction of cultural heritage by ISIL in Iraq.

95. The UNITAD-NGO Dialogue Forum continues to serve as an important platform for knowledge-sharing and the exchange of best practices with Iraqi and international non-governmental organizations in areas relevant to the investigative work of the Team. In the past six months, the Forum has convened two virtual events:

the semi-annual plenary meeting, held on 15 February 2022, and a fourth thematic round-table meeting, on ISIL crimes in the destruction of cultural heritage, to be held on 31 May 2022. During those events, participants discussed ways in which the Team could strengthen its cooperation with non-governmental organizations in order to ensure the effective implementation of its mandate. During the plenary meeting, a survivor is invited as a speaker to bring the perspectives of different survivors' and victims' groups to the Forum, in order to inform the ongoing discussions. The Forum has grown into a key convening umbrella that brings together UNITAD, international and local non-governmental organizations and survivors' groups.

96. As part of its continuous engagement with interfaith leaders, UNITAD, together with the office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide, partnered with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) presence in Iraq to convene the second high-level conference on the Interfaith Statement on the Victims and Survivors of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh), which was held on 18 May 2022 in Baghdad. The conference was aimed at building upon the momentum generated by the adoption of the landmark Interfaith Statement of March 2020 by the religious leaders of the Chaldean Catholic, Kaka'i, Shi'a, Sunni and Yazidi communities of Iraq, under the auspices of the office of the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide and UNITAD. More than 40 faith leaders from across Iraq participated in person in the conference, including some who were parties to the Interfaith Statement. The one-day conference was aimed at ensuring that accountability, as an integral part of sustainable social cohesion, remains at the heart of the support that the United Nations is providing to religious leaders and actors in Iraq, in order to advance healing, trust-building, reconciliation and social cohesion and to counter hate speech. The convening of the conference coincided with the first visit to Iraq by the Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, Alice Nderitu. The Special Adviser and Head of the Investigative Team, Christian Ritscher, together with Ms. Nderitu, the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq and Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, and the Resident Representative of UNDP in Iraq, Zena Ali-Ahmad, took part in the conference and engaged with interfaith leaders, reflecting the "One United Nations" approach in Iraq and building upon the work that UNDP Iraq has been doing with interfaith leaders over the past two years.

97. On 19 and 20 May 2022, Mr. Ritscher and Ms. Nderitu conducted joint field visits to Sinjar, where they visited the Kuju school memorial, the mass grave of the Yazidi mothers at the Solagh Institute and the mass grave recently excavated in Hardan. They also visited the Khankah internally displaced persons camp, the Free Yazidi Crafts and Enterprise project and the Yazidi community bakery. The two Special Advisers met extensively with Yazidi survivors in Kuju, Hardan and Khankah, answering their questions and listening to their concerns.

## **V. Cooperation in support of the activities of the Investigative Team**

### **A. Engaging Member States and providing support to ongoing national proceedings**

98. Pursuant to the mandate and terms of reference, the Team has continued to ensure that its investigative and analytical work is targeted in order to effectively support ongoing accountability processes relating to the international crimes of ISIL.

99. In Iraq, the Team has worked to strengthen the evidentiary and legal basis on which international criminal proceedings against ISIL may be taken forward. Building capacity within the judiciary to investigate and develop international crimes cases, as outlined in section IV, remains the priority for advancing this objective. The Team has focused on hands-on mentoring to implement the practical case-building modality during the reporting period, as indicated in section IV. With a view to expanding a core group of officials from the Iraqi judiciary that are competent in the areas of international criminal and humanitarian law, the Team will continue the training of select investigative judges and investigators during the next reporting period.

100. The Team remains ready to support and guide any national initiative aimed at the establishment of a legal basis for the prosecution of ISIL members in Iraq for international crimes. Such a legal basis would give full effect to the aforementioned training and mentoring of judicial officials, paving the way for the possibility of international criminal proceedings against ISIL being held in Iraq. The Team continues to receive regular updates on the progress of such initiatives and remained active in the relevant technical and legal discussions that were held during the reporting period.

101. In parallel, the Team has continued to strengthen its ability to provide support for ongoing national proceedings in Member States. A total of 15 Member States have requested assistance from the Team with respect to ongoing investigations and prosecutions. The ability of the Team to collect testimonial evidence from witnesses in direct response to requests for assistance, combined with its capacity to identify corroborating internal ISIL documentation from digital battlefield evidence, has been of significant assistance in supporting investigations by national authorities. During the reporting period, the Team has provided support for several investigations that are expected to lead to judicial proceedings.

102. In one case, the Team supported the Swedish Prosecution Authority in relation to the trial of a Swedish woman for committing international crimes, in particular war crimes, during her time with ISIL. The support provided by the Team included expert testimony in relation to ISIL practices on the enlistment, conscription and use of child soldiers. She was ultimately convicted during the reporting period for her failure to protect her minor son from being recruited and used as a child soldier by ISIL in battle, during which he subsequently died.

103. In another instance, the Team assisted the Portuguese national counter-terrorism police in a case against two Iraqi brothers from Mosul. The Team initiated an investigation in Mosul and sought the assistance of the Iraqi judiciary and law enforcement there, in particular that of the Head of the Counter-Terrorism Court of Ninawa. UNITAD and the Iraqi judiciary worked together to locate witnesses and obtain their statements. UNITAD then shared that evidence with the Portuguese authorities, which led to the arrest and prosecution of the two men for membership of a terrorist organization (ISIL). Furthermore, the Team has made it possible for the witnesses to testify by video link from the premises of UNITAD in as part of the pretrial proceedings currently ongoing in Portugal. Evidence from these witness testimonies may lead to additional charges related to crimes committed in Iraq, which will then form part of the subsequent trial proceedings.

104. The Team continues to develop its dedicated database by collating and cross-referencing evidence relating to foreign terrorist fighters, which has been successfully used to provide evidence to Member States. Furthermore, the Team started to include victim- and witness-focused data during the reporting period, in particular in relation to Yazidi women and children held in captivity by ISIL, along with information on their captors and their locations of captivity. The Team also started to work



collaboratively with Iraqi judiciary counterparts on flagging to Member States persons of interest allegedly associated with ISIL who have committed crimes in Iraq but have since fled abroad.

## **B. Ensuring coherence with United Nations system entities**

105. During the reporting period, the Team strengthened cooperative modalities with well-established partners within the United Nations system while also putting in place new channels for collaboration.

106. In April 2022, the Team became part of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact framework. Areas of focus for engagement with entities within the Compact will include prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration; research into chemical and biological weapons use by non-State actors and terrorist groups; countering the financing of terrorism; and the sanctions listing of ISIL members. The Team continues to be a member of the Global Framework for United Nations Support on Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq Third Country National Returnees. It is active in the technical coordinating committee in Iraq set up to give effect to that framework, in the joint scoping exercise and in the technical talks between the European Union and the United Nations under the framework. As part of these discussions, the Team has been striving to explore and propose priority issues that will set the scene for concrete recommendations in terms of the accountability and prosecution of ISIL members.

107. Engagement with the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions [1267 \(1999\)](#), [1989 \(2011\)](#) and [2253 \(2015\)](#) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities, chaired by the Deputy Permanent Representative of Norway to the United Nations, and with the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team, increased during the reporting period to advance the initiative to support the Government of Iraq in the development of application packages for the purpose of adding individuals to Security Council sanctions listings. The Team is also working closely with UNDP and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, along with the European Union Advisory Mission in Iraq, both in the development and delivery of the witness protection training programme that is outlined in section IV.

108. As mentioned in paragraph 96 above, UNITAD brought together the office of the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide and the UNDP office in Iraq to ensure that the work of the three entities with Iraqi interfaith leaders is synthesized and harmonized, consistent with the “One United Nations” approach.

109. Finally, the Team expresses its appreciation for the cooperation with and continued support of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, including through the Human Rights Office of UNAMI.

## **C. Cooperating with other entities**

110. Engagement with academic institutions, private sector entities and other partners in the work of the Team continued during the reporting period.

111. Cooperation with the Human Rights in Trauma Mental Health programme at Stanford University continued in order to strengthen practices pertaining to trauma-informed aspects of investigations. Following the joint publication of the *Trauma-Informed Investigations Field Guide* and a complementary *Reference Guide* in 2021, experts from the Team joined the programme team at the Stanford campus in April 2022 to hold a high-impact seminar on ensuring a trauma-informed approach to

accountability for the crimes committed by ISIL. The event gained the interest and backing of a wide audience supportive of the mandate and of the accountability efforts being made by the Team.

112. With the European Union, the Team has remained highly involved in the network of the European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation for the prosecution of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes and participated at its last session, held in The Hague, the Netherlands, on 6 and 7 April 2022, thereby demonstrating its commitment to supporting judicial authorities throughout Europe. Similarly, the Team has maintained its crucial role as the analytical and supporting platform for the joint investigation team created by the national prosecution authorities of France and Sweden to investigate core international crimes committed by ISIL against the Yazidi community. UNITAD provided support to national prosecution authorities from six Member States, including France and Sweden as the creators of the team and four States as observers. Under this framework, UNITAD took various coordinated investigative steps, including focused witness interviews with Yazidi witnesses in both Iraq and outside jurisdictions, the collection of battlefield evidence relating to Yazidi enslavement networks operated by foreign ISIL members, and searches within its own evidence holdings. In the joint investigative action, a victim-centric approach was adopted that was aimed at minimizing victim re-traumatization, through the incorporation of inputs from numerous authorities into a single line of questioning, and at identifying and exploiting key linkages between foreign terrorist fighters across jurisdictions to further prosecutorial action in numerous Member States.

## **VI. Promoting accountability globally**

113. In line with his mandate pursuant to paragraph 3 of Security Council resolution [2379 \(2017\)](#), the Special Adviser has continued his efforts to promote, throughout the world, accountability for crimes committed by ISIL and to work with survivors to ensure that their interests in achieving accountability for ISIL are fully recognized. Continuing the approach from previous reporting periods, the Special Adviser has sought to draw on the lessons learned from the investigative work of the Team in Iraq in order to promote good practice globally with respect to the investigation and prosecution of ISIL crimes.

114. Moreover, the Team established a partnership with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Iraq to organize a series of joint special events in cooperation with Iraqi embassies abroad, in order to highlight the joint efforts and ongoing cooperation between UNITAD and the Government of Iraq, in particular the Iraqi judiciary, in different areas of investigations, in pursuit of accountability for ISIL crimes.

115. On 13 April 2022, the Team, together with the Embassy of Iraq in Berlin and the Federal Foreign Office of Germany, co-hosted a special event in Berlin entitled “Investigating financial dimensions of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide: international legal and regulatory framework”, which brought together experts from UNITAD and the Iraqi judiciary to present the results of their close cooperation on financial investigations, an exemplary area upon which UNITAD wants to build in terms of information-sharing. The event was an opportunity to gather experts in international criminal law and the banking sector, as well as German officials from different offices to see first-hand the ongoing work of the Team and explore potential cooperation in areas of mutual interest. More than 50 participants took part in the event, which was held in person and presented an excellent opportunity for direct interactions between all those present, most of whom were meeting for the first time. The Team is grateful for the financial support of Germany,

which supports the work of the Economic Crimes Unit of UNITAD. The Unit is in charge of this investigative work.

116. On 10 June 2022, the Team and the Permanent Mission of Iraq to the United Nations in New York will co-host a special event at United Nations Headquarters in New York entitled “The pattern of mass killing: ISIL crimes against Tikrit Air Academy personnel”, focusing on the investigations of UNITAD and the Iraqi judiciary into the crimes committed against the cadets of Tikrit Air Academy, also known as “Camp Speicher”, in June 2014.

117. Finally, during the reporting period, the Team once again partnered with SITU Research, to produce a multimedia production about the mass killing of cadets and military personnel of Tikrit Air Academy, which will be shown during the special event.

## **VII. Funding and resources**

118. The Team has been able to make progress in pursuing the core functions of its mandate through regular budget funding, notably for critical staffing, which accounts for the most significant part of its funding requirements. The Team continues to consider more efficient ways of using its operational budget, including through employing virtual means of meeting and training, without compromising the value of in-person engagements and capacity-building activities. To ensure sustainability, the Team has increasingly made efforts to allocate regular budget funding to core infrastructure, such as for its information system and software, which was initially under its trust fund. This approach has become even more timely with the rising demand for such investments due to the increased evidence holdings that require international-standard equipment and software for processing and analysis.

119. The Team therefore remains grateful for the financial contributions to the trust fund from Denmark, France, India and Slovakia during the reporting period. The contribution from India will provide critical support to two underfunded areas of its investigations: the destruction of cultural heritage by ISIL, and its development and use of chemical and biological weapons. UNITAD will utilize this funding to add modern investigative tools to assist in expediting investigations in these areas. The financial support from France will be used to ensure the continuation of key field activities within Iraq. Both France and India are new donors to the Team. The contribution from Denmark will build upon previous Danish support to UNITAD efforts in the areas of building capacity, harnessing technology and investigating gender-based crimes and crimes against children.

120. Extrabudgetary funding remains crucial to maintaining operations and progress in the full implementation of its mandate. As the tempo of investigations in Iraq and requests for assistance from Member States increase, the demands on UNITAD systems and staff make extrabudgetary resources even more vital. The increasing volume of requests for assistance that the Team receives from Member States is particularly challenging and requires capacity to be increased so that it does not divert resources from other priority activities of the Team. Fundraising during the reporting period has been challenging because of the ongoing economic impact of COVID-19 and the deprioritization of ISIL in terms of funding earmarked for accountability efforts.

121. The Team is currently engaged in dialogue with several existing donors to explore the continuation of the funding currently being provided. This will be crucial to ensuring that progress towards ISIL accountability is sustained. There are positive indications that extrabudgetary funding will continue for field investigations and

thematic investigations; the digitization and archiving of ISIL evidence; mass grave investigations; and capacity-building for the Government of Iraq, including the Kurdistan Region.

122. The Team continues to encourage further contributions of funds, equipment and services from Member States, as well as from regional and intergovernmental organizations, in support of the implementation of its mandate, in accordance with paragraph 14 of Security Council resolution [2379 \(2017\)](#).

## VIII. Looking forward

123. The Team plans to continue to implement its strategic vision and provisional completion strategy, as outlined in section VIII of its previous report. In this regard, the Team will be prioritizing the following areas during the next reporting period:

(a) Completion of case assessment reports with respect to the following priority areas of investigation:

- (i) Crimes committed in relation to the development and use of biological and chemical weapons by ISIL;
- (ii) Crimes committed against the Christian community.

(b) Completion of initial findings in support of new lines of inquiry within existing investigations:

- (i) Crimes against cultural heritage;
- (ii) Crimes committed against the Sunni community;
- (iii) Crimes committed against Kaka'i, Shabak and Shia Turkmen communities;
- (iv) ISIL leadership and hierarchical structure in Mosul and in Tall Afar;
- (v) Crimes committed against the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer community;
- (vi) Role of the ISIL *diwan* for natural and buried resources (*Diwan al-Rikaz*), antiquities trafficking, and the crime of pillage.

(c) Supporting additional mass grave excavations in Sinjar and Tall Afar, and initiating the second phase of the evidence digitization and archiving project, with the goal of deepening the available evidence to augment the development of case files in cooperation with the Iraqi judiciary.

(d) Continuing the provision of training in international criminal and humanitarian law to Iraqi investigative judges and investigators in partnership with the International Nuremberg Principles Academy and capacity-building for hands-on mentoring in the preparation of perpetrator case files.

(e) Engaging, at the request of the Government of Iraq, in the continued provision of technical expertise to support the adoption of national legislation in Iraq allowing for the prosecution of ISIL members for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.

(f) Continuing to keep Iraqi authorities, including the Kurdistan Regional Government, informed of the key findings of investigations conducted by the Team, and advancing modalities that would enable the Team to share information, such as through Security Council sanctions listing or in the area of ISIL financing, consistent with the terms of reference.

(g) Further strengthening the assistance provided to national proceedings globally, in cooperation with Iraqi authorities.

(h) Organizing specialized events in the region and beyond to promote cooperation between the Team and the Government of Iraq and progress towards ISIL accountability.

124. The Team will continue to implement these priorities in close cooperation with the Government of Iraq, including the National Coordinating Committee and the Kurdistan Regional Government, and key partners across the country, including survivor groups, affected communities and religious leaders.

## **IX. Conclusion**

125. The Team remains steadfast in its commitment to delivering justice for the victims and survivors of ISIL crimes. During the reporting period, the Team experienced a boost in its ability to undertake key strategic, operational and evidence-collection activities that directly contributed to advancing the investigative vision and provisional completion strategy that the Team has set out for itself. While structural investigations and new lines of investigative inquiry will continue, the Team is now in the midst of some of its most important work – the development of international crimes case files in order to hold to account those ISIL perpetrators that are most accountable – and continues to work with the Iraqi authorities to build their capacity in this regard. This means looking more closely at ISIL from the top down, and at how the leadership, structures, ideology and decision-making factored into the crimes that were committed and that the Team is actively investigating; narrowing the investigations around persons of interests and shifting from evidence collection to the provision of support for trials; and having the adequate core international crimes legislation in place.

126. During the reporting period, the Team and the Government of Iraq were able to further raise the international profile of their collaboration on advancing ISIL accountability efforts and of the work of the Team specifically to achieve that accountability. This has played a unique part in raising awareness, at the global level, of the leadership that Iraq has shown in this area while also offering a stark picture of the multitude and magnitude of crimes committed by ISIL. It is clear that the Team and its work continue to provide a basis on which Member States can advance efforts to hold those responsible for ISIL crimes to account. The impetus to do so continues to resonate strongly in Iraq and in the communities most affected by those crimes.