



Iraq: UN envoy demands Islamist forces end 'horrific terrorist acts'

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The top United Nations official in Iraq called today on the Security Council to demand that the Islamist forces - in control of more than a third of the country's territory - cease all hostilities and to ensure that those responsible for "horrific terrorist acts" are held to account.

"From a splinter group of Al-Qaida, ISIL [Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant] today has grown to be a complex threat to peace and security in Iraq, the entire region and beyond," Nickolay Mladenov told the Council via video-teleconference from Baghdad.

Mr. Mladenov, who also heads the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), said the solution to Iraq's current challenges, including efforts to contain ISIL, could not be found "in the toolbox of military operations."

Introducing the Secretary-General's latest report on UNAMI, Mr. Mladenov said that ISIL aimed to establish a permanent foothold beyond the control of authorities through terror and violence. The Islamist forces seek to radicalize people and undermine the Government by exploiting legitimate grievances and manipulating divisions within society.

On 21 July, the Security Council condemned ISIL's persecution of Christian and other minority groups in Northern Iraq, while the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights had confirmed that ISIL had committed war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Between January and June of this year 5,500 Iraqis were killed and 12,000 have been wounded. Almost 900 were killed this month alone. More than 1.2 million people have fled their homes since the latest fighting.

The UN has identified over 1,600 sites of displacement, where access to necessities remains challenging, he continued. The Kurdistan region alone is now hosting over 300,000 newly displaced who have joined the more than 225,000 Syrian refugees already there.

Mr. Mladenov said in Iraq, establishing lasting security and Government control must be broadly accepted across societal divides and implemented in cooperation with the Kurdistan Regional Government. Demands from Sunnis and others that are constitutionally sound must be addressed as well. All should stand together against terrorism, he said.

The momentum generated by the election of the legislature's leadership must translate into the election of a new President and Government. Iraq must continue to receive regional and international support to face ISIL and other challenges.

He added: "Iraq cannot afford a protracted Government formation process."

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