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Assyrian Universal Alliance
Americas Chapter, Inc

An organization in Special Consultative Status with the United Nations
Economic and Social Council since

6th Session Forum on Minority Issues
Agenda Item 2: Legal Frameworks and Key Concepts

Good morning Madam Independent Expert:

On behalf of the Assyrian Universal Alliance, I would like to bring attention to the particular human rights challenges facing religious minorities in post-conflict situations and highlight the need to implement affirmative measures to protect their rights in such contexts.

As reflected in the Draft Recommendations, the Declaration on the Rights of Minorities as well as various other human rights instruments hold that states have an affirmative obligation to not only end discriminatory practices, but ensure minorities enjoy genuine equality in all aspects of society.

The reality that minorities are affected more severely during conflict is recognized by the mandate of the Independent Expert, which reads, "[m]inorities often suffer disproportionately the effects of conflict resulting in the violation of their human rights." Despite such language, the Draft Recommendations fall short of acknowledging the need for special measures to combat the de facto barriers to equality that result from conflict.

For example in Iraq, reports from Hammurabi Human Rights Organization indicate that Assyrian Christians are vastly underrepresented in public office and state security forces following Iraq's conflict. This reality stems in large part from the disproportionate percentage of Assyrians displaced in and outside of the country. Had there been special measures promoting equality in fact, this lack of integration could have been avoided.

Madam Independent Expert, we ask that the revised recommendations include clear language urging states to consider appropriate special measures soon after instances of conflict. Such recognition will help ensure the continued existence and integration of minorities in their country's reconstruction.

In addition Madam Independent Expert, the AUA respectfully urges you to address the various human rights concerns currently facing Iraq's ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities by exercising the authority of your mandate to conduct a country visit to that state. Since Iraq issued a standing invitation to all Human Rights Council Special Procedures mandate holders in 2010, no Independent Expert on Minority Issues has conducted a country visit in the Middle East nor requested a country visit to any part of the Arab World. It is pertinent for Iraq, and for the work of the Human Rights Council, that timely evaluation of human rights challenges facing Iraq's minorities takes place before the damage being done escapes any repairs that the international community can provide.

In conclusion, we would like to thank the Assyrian Universal Alliance Foundation for making our participation at this Forum possible.