

Civil Society Dialogue Network Meeting

Armed violence and capacities for peace in Iraq: actors, causes, impact and EU responses

Wednesday 3 December 2014, Brussels

Objectives:

The overall objective of the meeting is to gather civil society input into the European Union's assessment of the situation in Iraq and the development and implementation of its strategies and ongoing activities. Specifically:

- To identify causes of armed violence in Iraq and the role of different armed groups
- To outline possible scenarios for the evolution of armed groups in Iraq
- To identify local, regional and international capacities for ending and resisting violence and for promotion of peace in Iraq
- To assess possible response options for the EU

Background:

The European External Action Service (EEAS) is in the process of developing an EU comprehensive regional strategy for Syria and Iraq as well as the ISIL/Da'esh threat. The strategy was requested by the Foreign Affairs Council in the Council Conclusions of 20 October 2014 in order to support peace and stability in the region. While significant political and media attention has focused on ISIL, other armed groups also threaten the stability of Iraq. Efforts to build accountable institutions in Iraq have stalled; acute challenges remain, from inclusion of minorities, to reform and development of the security sector, and equitable management of country's resources. The capacities of the central government remain weak. It is not considered legitimate by many sectors of the population and is increasingly discounted by external actors.

In this context, the return of ISIL to Iraq from Syria, its conquest of territory, and its dramatic media actions have generated widespread panic in the region and in Europe alike. A range of external actors, from the US to Iran, have launched responses to ISIL, all of which will have effects on the delicate balances of power and relations between communities in Iraq.

The focus in the meeting will be on Iraq, due to time constraints other regional crises will not be explored in detail, however it is recognised that the multiple crises in the region are interconnected, in particular that action of ISIL and other armed groups in Iraq are both enabled by and feed into the ongoing conflict in Syria. The horrific violence in Syria serves as an enabling factor that facilitates conflict across the region.

The meeting will bring together civil society analysts, primarily from the region, to provide their assessment of the causes of instability and risks of conflict in Iraq. They will also be invited to provide their views on the capacities for peace in Iraq, that is, capacities for halting violence in the short-term and contributing to peace in the longer-term.

Structure:

- Informal practical workshop with interactive but tightly facilitated sessions under Chatham House rule.
- The meeting will use adapted conflict analysis methodology.

Participants:

- Civil society analysts primarily from Iraq, but also from Syria and the wider region, plus a limited number of international civil society peacebuilding experts on Iraq and Syria.
- Policy-makers from across the EU institutions.

Simultaneous interpretation Arabic–English/ English–Arabic will be provided

Agenda

9h00: Introduction to the day

9h15 – 10h45: Session 1 – Armed violence in Iraq: causes and actors (part 1)

Participants' analysis of:

- What are the causes of current armed violence in Iraq?
- Which groups are currently involved in and supporting armed violence?
- Which groups are armed and prepared for violence and/or providing security?
- What are the motivations, composition, and recruitment tactics of these groups?

10h45 – 11h00: Coffee break

11.00 – 13h00: Session 2 – Armed violence in Iraq: causes and actors (part 2)

Continued, plus:

- What is the likely evolution of armed violence in Iraq? What are most likely scenarios in one year? In three years? What are the best case and worst case scenarios?

13h00 – 14h00: Lunch

14h00 – 15h30: Session 3 – Capacities for peace; resilience to violence

Participants' assessment of the capacities and initiatives in Iraq:

- To end and resist violence?
- To support peace in the long-term?
- What regional and international capacities exist to end violence and to support peace?

15h30 – 16h00: Coffee break

16h00 – 17h30: Session 4 – Response Options for the EU

Current and potential EU activities (summarised by EU officials) to frame the discussion.

Options and overall strategy:

- Windows of opportunity for external actors
- Options for new activities and assessment of the feasibility of different options
- Impact on conflict dynamics, actors and structures of possible new options.

Civil Society Dialogue Network

The Civil Society Dialogue Network (CSDN) is a mechanism for dialogue between civil society and EU policy-makers on issues related to peace and conflict. It is co-financed by the European Union (Instrument for Stability). It is managed by EPLO, a civil society network, in co-operation with the European Commission (EC) and the European External Action Service (EEAS). The second phase of the CSDN will last from 2014 to 2016. For more information, please visit the [EPLO website](#).