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Für ein freies ezidisches Bewusstsein!

**Press release**

Essen, 07.04.2021

### **Press release of GEA on the current situation of the Ezidi in Shingal (Sinjar/Northern Iraq)**

We are following with growing concern the political and military developments in the northern Iraqi region of Shingal (Sinjar), the largest contiguous settlement area of the Ezidi worldwide. After the start of the Ezidi genocide in 2014 and despite the military pushback of the Islamic State (IS) in the following year, the conditions for a safe return of the Ezidi to their homeland have not been created until today. In addition to a lack of will for political and economic reconstruction in the interests of the local population, it is primarily the diverging interests of the central government in Baghdad and the Kurdish regional government in Arbil that stand in the way of stabilizing the region. In October 2020, an agreement on the future of the region was adopted by these two governments, but it does not provide for structures of federal self-organization and self-defense for Ezidi. They were neither consulted nor involved in the negotiations. Most recently, the central and regional governments have increased pressure on the Ezidi self-organization units and security forces in Shingal to disarm. There is a threat of political and military escalation, with the Ezidi population once again suffering as a result. This must be countered with all determination. Political dialogue must continue, any military escalation must be avoided and the focus must be on common interests.

The political developments in Shingal since the genocide in the summer of 2014 have clearly brought one thing to light: The only logical and appropriate response to the devastating consequences of the genocide can only be the establishment and further development of a Ezidi administrative and executive organization with defensible self-defense structures in Shingal. Autonomy for Shingal within the federal Iraqi state is politically and socially imperative and would fit well into the reality of the multi-ethnic state of Iraq. Since its founding, Iraq has always taken the heterogeneous population structure into account, but it has repeatedly favored the large population groups (Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds) and often ignored the minorities. When-as here in Shingal-a population group represents the vast majority in the region, it must also have a political and administrative say in negotiating its future. The constitutional prerequisites for autonomy clearly exist under the Iraqi constitution and would only need to be addressed with the necessary political will. An autonomous region of the Ezidi in Shingal can and will work to the benefit of the entire country because political stability would emanate from it. "The centuries-long and systematic persecution, displacement and annihilation of the Ezidi in the Middle East must finally be brought to an end so that this peaceful and philanthropic religious community can once again have a future," demands our chairman Prof. Dr. Sefik Tagay.

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As the most important political force among the Kurds in northern Iraq, the KDP is in a particularly responsible position. It must support the Ezidi in their justified struggle for political participation rights if it wants to continue to be a guarantor of security and stability in the northern region of Iraq. History shows that Ezidi from Shingal, though not de facto part of the Autonomous Region of Kurdistan-Iraq, have always maintained a political connection to this regional administration. A Shingal self-determined by Ezidi within the federal state can continue this tradition of cooperation with benefits for all sides. This can also help to overcome the deep emotional rift between Ezidi and Muslim Kurds that has developed since the genocide in the mutual interest and put an end to the susceptibility to political instrumentalization. In the long term, this can only be in the interest of the Iraqi state, which has been struggling for political stability for almost two decades.

In addition to our demand for autonomy for Shingal and the promotion of political and social dialogue, we are particularly concerned that all actors should resolutely oppose any attempts at military escalation. The civilian population, which has suffered most severely from the genocide so far, would not survive this.

Our appeal is also explicitly directed to the United Nations (UN), which has a responsibility to stand up for the rights of the Ezidi after the genocide and to prevent wars. Without outside political commitment, the protection of minorities cannot succeed and a Ezidi life in Iraq cannot flourish again.

Association of Ezidi Academics (GEA)

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