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The
Displacement of
Minorities in
Syria and Iraq:
Implications for
Human Security



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The Displacement of Minorities in Syria and Iraq

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This research programme focuses on a range of issues related to the wellbeing and recognition of people who traverse continents devoid of citizenship. Issues related to refugees remain crucially unanswered in debates and policies surrounding migration. In the wake of acknowledgement within the academy that it is not always possible to isolate refugees from migrants, this programme analyzes a range of contexts where dignity and human rights are compromised through the absence of legal and political recognition. By focusing on situations of extreme vulnerability and on lives lived on the borderline, this research programme seeks to articulate and address urgent needs with regard to the stateless migrants who have entered Europe.

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Summary

This year marks the end of the MDGs and the setting of arguably a new chapter for the multilateral system¹. The beginning of the Post-2015 period comes also at a time of greatest humanitarian strain since the inception of the post-War system². Since 9/11, the world has gone through rapid transformation and continues to change at great pace, in the course of which, the older frameworks of understanding and protecting the sanctity and diversity of human life have been brought into question.

¹ This year also marks the beginning of a new chapter for the international state system. China enters 2015 as the world's largest economic power, displacing the United States from the top slot.

² The situation in Syria (and Iraq) which is the focus of this report has been termed "the biggest humanitarian emergency of our era" by António Guterres, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

The Displacement of Minorities in Syria and Iraq

This policy report considers the case of Syria and Iraq. The on-going displacement of minorities in Syria and Iraq, it argues, brings the normative conception of Human Security in the UN system to crisis. As globalization continues to strengthen transnational movement of ideas, populations, as well as conflicts, the notion of security also continues to shift, sliding away from the domain of the national towards the domain of the individual, thereby providing the intellectual impetus for this report.

The Systemic Context

The Middle East, generally, and Syria and Iraq, particularly, are in a bad way. The year 2014 holds particular significance for it brought the plight of the region's people to the forefront of global political discourse due to the rise of the Islamic State. Although by no means was their plight itself a novel occurrence, what the region is witnessing today is essentially a long drawn process of structural change, ushered in by a series of triggering events. The reaction of powerful states to the tragic events of September 11, 2001, followed by the American-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, and thereafter, the widely resonating Arab-Spring uprisings in 2011, fundamentally unsettled the status quo in the region, pushing the region into a period of systemic change that is presently underway.

An outcome of this process is that the more organic, historically and culturally rooted, kinships between human collectives have overrun modern nation-state boundaries. The Kurds of Syria, Iraq and Turkey – who happen to be a minority in each of these states – are an essential example of such kinships. As a corollary, there is then also a fundamentally identity based conflict on which a lid was kept by authoritarian regimes of Saddam Hussein and Bashar al-Assad for several decades, which has now surfaced owing to the unsettling of the regional power structure. Sectarian rivalries, backed by geopolitical contentions between regional powers, have created a potent mix of human geography, ideology and politics.

Finally, the regional context presents a very strongly transnational picture. The Islamic State has openly advertised its disregard for the border between Syria and Iraq. Iraqi Shi'a militias, too, on Iraqi government payrolls and under the guidance of the Iranian Qods force and Lebanese Hezbollah, straddle the border between Syria and Iraq. In Syria, they fight in support of the Assad regime against a plethora of rebels. In northern Iraq, the same militias, along with units of Iraqi army, mount campaigns against the Islamic State. Then there are the refugees, most of whom have suffered multiple displacements, which most prominently manifest the transnational nature of

the regional context. Of the Iraqi refugees in Syria, those that were displaced since 2003 and of the Syrian refugees in Iraq, those that were displaced since 2011, many have been doubly displaced, back and forth, from Iraq to Syria and from Syria to Iraq. These spillovers, cultural, human, and political, necessitate that one considers Syria and Iraq as a single context when contemplating the human security framework.

Human Security

'Freedom from fear, freedom from want, and freedom to live in dignity' – these three freedoms, introduced under the banner of human security over 20 years ago in a UNDP report³, continue to signify, and form the core of, the human security approach of the United Nations. The human security approach, first elaborated in 1994, has since attracted both criticism and serious attention from policy circles and academia alike. Some governments, including those of Japan⁴, Canada and Norway have promoted the growth of this concept, while the UN continues to make efforts for its mainstreaming within its own work and that of other civil society organizations.

Both within the UN and outside, a plethora of studies on human security exist. This report does not delve in this material in detail, but rather takes only a cursory view of it, quickly moving to the more immediate concern of culture and security. It is, nevertheless, pertinent to point towards some important UN documents that highlight the concept's institutional evolution. Notably, in response to the Secretary General's call⁵ at the 2000 Millennium Summit for a world "free from want" and "free from fear", the Commission on Human Security (CHS) was established in January 2001. Led by Sadako Ogata, former head of UNHCR, and Amartya Sen, Nobel Laureate in Economics, the Commission completed its final report titled "Human Security Now: Protecting and Empowering People" by mid-2003. In this landmark report, the commission went on to present a definition of human security. According to the CHS, human security is: "protect[ing] the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and human fulfilment." It further elaborated this broad conception by saying that,

³ See "UNDP Human Development Report – 1994"

⁴ As its significant contribution to the promotion of Human Security, the Government of Japan along with the United Nations Secretariat established the UN Trust Fund for Human Security (UNTFHS) in 1999 under the management of the Office of the UN Controller, with an initial contribution of approximately US\$ 5 million.

⁵ See "UN Millennium Project"

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Human security means protecting fundamental freedoms—freedoms that are the essence of life. It means protecting people from critical (severe) and pervasive (widespread) threats and situations. It means using processes that build on people’s strengths and aspirations. It means creating political, social, environmental, economic, military and cultural systems that together give people the building blocks of survival, livelihood and dignity.

The CHS report emphasized that human security should be viewed as a comprehensive and complex issue requiring a holistic approach (OSAA 4). But in so doing, even when providing a definition, it kept the notion of human security too broad and perhaps even impracticable.

Later, in its efforts towards mainstreaming the concept within the work of the UN, the Human Security Unit was set up within the OCHA (Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) in 2004. Thereafter the UN’s Trust Fund for Human Security (UNTFHS) published a handbook in 2009, titled “Human Security in Theory and Practice”, which ostensibly serves as an official guideline for the implementation of the approach in UN funded projects. Most importantly, the common understanding on human security was agreed upon by the UN General Assembly in resolution 66/290 adopted on 10 September 2012⁶.

In this resolution, which clearly reaffirms the centrality of the three freedoms, as highlighted earlier, the UN’s understanding of human security as a notion is further elaborated in a set of eight points.

Excerpt from General Assembly Resolution 66/290 (See Appendix for full text)

3) Agrees that human security is an approach to assist Member States in identifying and addressing widespread and cross-cutting challenges to the survival, livelihood and dignity of their people. Based on this, a common understanding on the notion of human security includes the following:

- (a) The right of people to live in freedom and dignity, free from poverty and despair. All individuals, in particular, vulnerable people, are entitled to freedom from fear and freedom from want, with an equal opportunity to enjoy all their rights and fully develop their human potential;
- (b) Human security calls for people-centred, comprehensive, context-specific and prevention-oriented responses that strengthen the protection and

⁶ See appendix

empowerment of all people and all communities;

(c) Human security recognizes the interlinkages between peace, development and human rights, and equally considers civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights;

(d) The notion of human security is distinct from the responsibility to protect and its implementation;

(e) Human security does not entail the threat or the use of force or coercive measures. Human security does not replace State security;

(f) Human security is based on national ownership. Since the political, economic, social and cultural conditions for human security vary significantly across and within countries, and at different points in time, human security strengthens national solutions which are compatible with local realities;

(g) Governments retain the primary role and responsibility for ensuring the survival, livelihood and dignity of their citizens. The role of the international community is to complement and provide the necessary support to Governments, upon their request, so as to strengthen their capacity to respond to current and emerging threats. Human security requires greater collaboration and partnership among Governments, international and regional organizations and civil society;

(h) Human security must be implemented with full respect for the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, including full respect for the sovereignty of States, territorial integrity and non-interference in matters that are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of States. Human security does not entail additional legal obligations on the part of States.

In resolution 66/290⁷, much as in all of the previously published documents, and besides the general conceptual vagueness, human security remains devoid of a rigorous notion of culture. The resolution goes only so far as saying that it “considers” cultural rights along with other rights, such as civil, political and economic. It remains to be shown, in both policy and practice, how this “consideration” of culture may manifest itself. The present report returns to this issue in much detail in due course.

The following year, at the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly, the Secretary General presented his report on human security as a follow-up to the resolution 66/290. The Secretary General’s report reiterated the common

⁷ A significantly problematic aspect of the clause on common understanding of human security in this resolution is the addition of national and state centric provisions which undermine the spirit of human security, whose fundamental intent is to move away from state centric conceptions of security.

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understanding of human security in the resolution 66/290, which it said drew “on 7 years of discussion on human security at the General Assembly and builds on nearly 20 years of experience of implementing the human security approach within the United Nations system and beyond” (3). The report concludes by requesting the General Assembly to consider human security as an overarching framework in the post-2015 development agenda (18).

In 2014, the Human Security Unit published its strategic plan for the following three years (2014-2017). Issued in March, the plan lays out a vision and mission framework whereby it emphasizes the application of human security approach in a manner that is people-centred, comprehensive, context-specific and prevention-oriented.

Moving closer to the end of the year, in December 2014, the Synthesis Report of the Secretary General on the Post-2015 Agenda, “The Road to Dignity by 2030” was issued. This report avoids explicitly mentioning human security, thereby diluting its significance in the Post-2015 agenda somewhat. In spite of its conceptual broadness and the resulting criticism of the approach, Human Security discourse has continued to gain ground both within the UN system and outside with healthy force (Gasper 2). The brief timeline highlighted above demonstrates its well established place in the UN narrative. But despite the absence of a standard definition even after 20 years, notwithstanding the various normative conceptions and common understandings, it is the intent of the Human Security approach which remains its primary and most potent driving force.

Human Security remains and will become increasingly important in the future, owing to international systemic trends, because it constitutes an important intellectual step towards the eventual recognition of the individual as a legal person in the sphere of international law⁸. It is this virtue, by way of its intent, that makes human security the single most important framework in the work of the UN.

Given this premise, and after recognizing the importance of this framework, it ought to be pointed out now that the absence of a rigorous notion of cultural security within the overarching human security framework, undermines the

⁸ While the European Union has made more progress in this regard than others, the general truth remains that there is no legal personhood outside of a state – extra stato nulla persona –in the contemporary international system. The long term (perhaps even utopian) hope is that human security may eventually become an international norm and thereafter acquire legal force, thereby leading to the recognition of the individual as an actor in the international system.

concept in practice. The fact remains that there is almost no discussion of culture as an issue area within human security as demonstrated by its absence in all of the above mentioned key texts. The result of this is that the normative conception of human security breaks down when tested against facts on the ground, as this report will demonstrate shortly.

Cultural Security

Just as the human security concept is far from maturity, the notion of cultural security is even further. The notion of cultural security has not been discussed within the UN system before, while in academia just a handful of scholars have considered the concept in only a cursory manner. Therefore there is not a definition of cultural security either. This section will consider this concept in some detail but refrain nevertheless from proposing a formalized definition. It will rather propose an understanding of cultural security, as a way of mitigating the gap that exists in the normative conception of human security. Therefore it perceives human security as an overarching framework, and cultural security as its (missing) building block.

This report draws on the regional context of Syria and Iraq, and in the following section, gives an overview of the displacement of minorities in this particular regional context. The lessons from this context dictate that indigenous peoples and cultural minorities are key international actors in the context of cultural security as their condition essentially helps us articulate this concept.

What then is Cultural Security⁹?

In order to address this question, to elucidate the compound term, one must first look at the notion of culture on its own.

⁹ It may also be asked that in the existence of a plethora of other well recognized ways of looking at culture, and protecting it, why frame it as such – as a security issue – rather than as protection, preservation, sustainable development and the like? One reason is certainly a pragmatic one. The notion of security has more institutional leverage than culture on its own. But that aside, cultural security is distinct from protection or preservation; it is comprehensive. Most importantly of all, cultural security is framed as a security issue because it is posited hereby as a component of human security (and not a standalone framework), which in turn has its own justification for being a distinct concept from human rights etc.

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While the definition of culture itself is a matter of contention, one commonly used definition cited by UNESCO is:

[Culture] is that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by [a human] as a member of society.

This definition works just fine as a point of departure. The idea, however, that one must take away from this, irrespective of the definition, is that culture constitutes a broad, fluid and dynamic notion (Forrest 1). Therefore culture stands in contrast to, for example, the idea of a state whose boundaries are demarcated and therefore assumed to be static at a given point in time. Securing a state is consequently a comparatively straightforward enterprise, which begins on a most basic level by physically securing its borders against perceived threats. The boundaries of culture, on the other hand, are of course permeable and in constant flux, which is what presents us with a problem.

This is as much an intellectual problem as it is a practical one. Katherine Pratt Ewing, while illustrating the broader implications of this issue, writes that:

In conflict after conflict based on identity politics, it is often the presumption on the part of participants and/or observers that such identities are rooted in a distinctive 'culture' that must be preserved and defended. This idea of a fixed culture and the fixed identities that have emerged from it is itself a product of a recent global discourse that is played out in the media and has roots in certain older anthropological approaches that named cultures, drew boundaries between societies, and presumed that 'cultures' were timeless traditions that needed to be studied before they 'disappeared' under the pressure of modernity (Friedman and Randeria 117).

So while one must today be mindful of the problems associated with naming and defining – or the essentialization of – cultures, the importance of protecting them and each one of their constituents nevertheless remains unimpeded.

Given the nature of culture, the prospect of securing it is exacerbated particularly through means of legal protection: once you define and prescribe what you want to protect, you create artificial permanence and thereby inhibit natural change that is an essential feature of any living culture (Forrest 1). Living cultures, in the likeness of rivers, are persistent in that they have a

well-defined course, but they are also at the same time, expanding and contracting on the banks as per natural influence. This tension between permanence and dynamic change is therefore at the heart of cultural security. To this end, security theorists belonging to the Copenhagen school have provided a very useful category of “societal security”. While it generally helps in moving towards human security and away from national security, the idea of societal security nevertheless operates only on a group level, thereby still being distinct from cultural security. Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde write that:

For international security analysis, the key to society is those ideas and practices that identify individuals as members of a social group. Society is about identity, the self-conception of communities and of individuals identifying themselves as members of a community. These identities are distinct from, although often entangled with, the explicitly political organizations concerned with government...The organizing concept in the societal sector is identity...Definitionally, societal security is about large, self-sustaining identity groups (119).

Ole Wæver further elaborates on this by defining societal security as:

The capacity of a society to conserve its specific character in spite of changing conditions and real or virtual threats: more precisely, it involves the permanence of traditional schemas of language, culture, associations, identity and national or religious practices, allowing for changes that are judged to be acceptable.

The above conception of societal security, while still removed from the individual by a degree, helps nevertheless in posing a key question: How do we create secure, open spaces in tenuous social contexts where cultures – in their plurality – can grow of their own accord? It helps, too, in recognizing the centrality of identity in the broader human security discourse.

The idea of cultural security also bases itself on the organizing principle of identity, but strives to bridge the societal level with the individual, recognizing identity as a broad category that encompasses culture, but also lived experience, that while distinct at both individual and group levels is also at the same time bound by both levels. Cultural security therefore explicitly refers to both individual and collective identity in its articulation.

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If we begin with the premise that a singularly fixed identity is not the cornerstone of self-experience¹⁰, of both individuals and collectives, we can then focus instead on the fluidity of identity as the basis of cultural security. This report takes the perspective that identities have a dialectical nature – they are always becoming – and they become by way of negotiation. This dialectic is the basis of every culture and of those who partake in it. Modern juridical-political system gives rise to the proliferation and naturalization of identities, creating and policing the categories that individuals and collectives are obliged – and at times forced – to take up as identities.

On a more fundamental level, since the “self” is always defined in terms of, and in relation to, the “other”, once the “other” changes, the self is inevitably reconfigured. A re-negotiation must then take place to maintain harmony within and amongst differing identities. Consider, for instance, a mobile person – internationally or even nationally mobile – whose context is always changing. The “other” that he or she interacts with is always different, changing, and therefore he or she must constantly re-negotiate his or her identity with the ever changing context. The issue of dialectical identities is therefore particularly salient for migrants and minorities.

Given this premise, it is recognized here that identities, both individual and collective, are formed by way of negotiation. This process, above all, is dependent on two elements: (1) the context and (2) the power structure in the context. Identities are therefore negotiated in relation to a given context and with the powers-that-be in that context. Consequently the most obvious corollary to this is that structural change is a precursor to the re-negotiation of identities – structural change necessitates that a re-negotiation take place. In a time of globalization, migration, and transnational conflict, contexts are constantly changing, but as seen in Syria and Iraq, so are the power structures. Given the socio-political reality in Syria and Iraq, when the freedom to re-negotiate identity – as necessitated by structural change – is inhibited, we have a resulting situation of cultural insecurity. This is most aptly demonstrated by the condition of minorities in the region. A Yazidi, for example, having previously negotiated his or her identity with the regime of Saddam Hussein, found him or herself unable to re-negotiate in a changed – and persistently changing – context after the 2003 invasion of Iraq, whereby the new powers-that-be were either unwilling to negotiate, as in the case of the Islamic State, or the fluidity of the context rendered a re-negotiation untenable, leading to a state of cultural insecurity that is today pervasive in Syria and Iraq.

¹⁰ See (Friedman and Randeria 119)

The inverse of the above scenario is therefore what constitutes cultural security: Cultural security is essentially the freedom to re-negotiate both individual and collective identities. A culturally secure space is one where both groups and individuals are at liberty to re-negotiate – more than once – their collective and individual identities. This is therefore the basis of an ideal open space where cultures can be and grow of their own accord¹¹.

This Displacement of Minorities in Syria and Iraq: An Overview

Even a cursory glance at the human geography of the region shows that Syria and Iraq are a belt of mixed populations. While the year 2013 witnessed the largest displacement of religious communities in recent memory¹², across the globe, this devastating scenario has been most pronounced in Syria and Iraq, owing in great part to the vulnerability of minorities on the cultural map of the region. In the map below, the population-island of Armenian Christians in Deir az Zur, which falls in the midst of the Sunni belt, or Hassakeh in the same vein, shown in pink, demonstrate the susceptibility of these minorities in a highly uncertain context. The Yazidis, colour coded in black, are another vulnerable population-island falling in the midst of the Sunni belt on the Syria-Iraq border. On the other hand, the Sunni belt, highlighted in purple, almost exactly overlaps the map of territories controlled by the Islamic State, thereby showing us, how some of these cultural minorities fell prey to the violence of Islamic State, primarily on grounds of cultural insecurity (see Appendix).

In contrast then, Baghdad, under the watch of the UN itself, as well as that of multinational forces for over a decade, has been the sight of systemic sectarian cleansing of non-Shi'a minorities. This campaign, as atrocious as that of the Islamic State in the north¹³, has been carried out by the state-

¹¹ This idea of security is non-exclusive since every cultural constituent's security is ensured by way of an interminable allowance for re-negotiation. The question of one group or individual threatening the cultural security of another group or individual can therefore be dismissed since (1) a culturally secure space does not allow any constituent to undermine another's freedom to re-negotiation; and (2) such a perspective of threat to any one culture is based on the outdated notion of static cultures or static identities, which as discussed earlier, is not the case in reality.

¹² See "International Religious Freedom Report"

¹³ See for example "Absolute Impunity: Militia Rule in Iraq", Amnesty International, for detailed and well documented atrocities of the Shi'a militias

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funded Shi'a militias of Iraq. The evolution of Baghdad since 2003, from a multi-cultural and multi-religious metropolis, with majority mixed neighbourhoods, into one dominated by Iraqi Shi'as and sharply segregated across sectarian lines has been observed particularly since 2006 in many news stories, reports of the US State Department, as well as those of the Multi National Force in Iraq. This transformation is aptly demonstrated when the map of the city is colour-coded by religion (see Appendix).

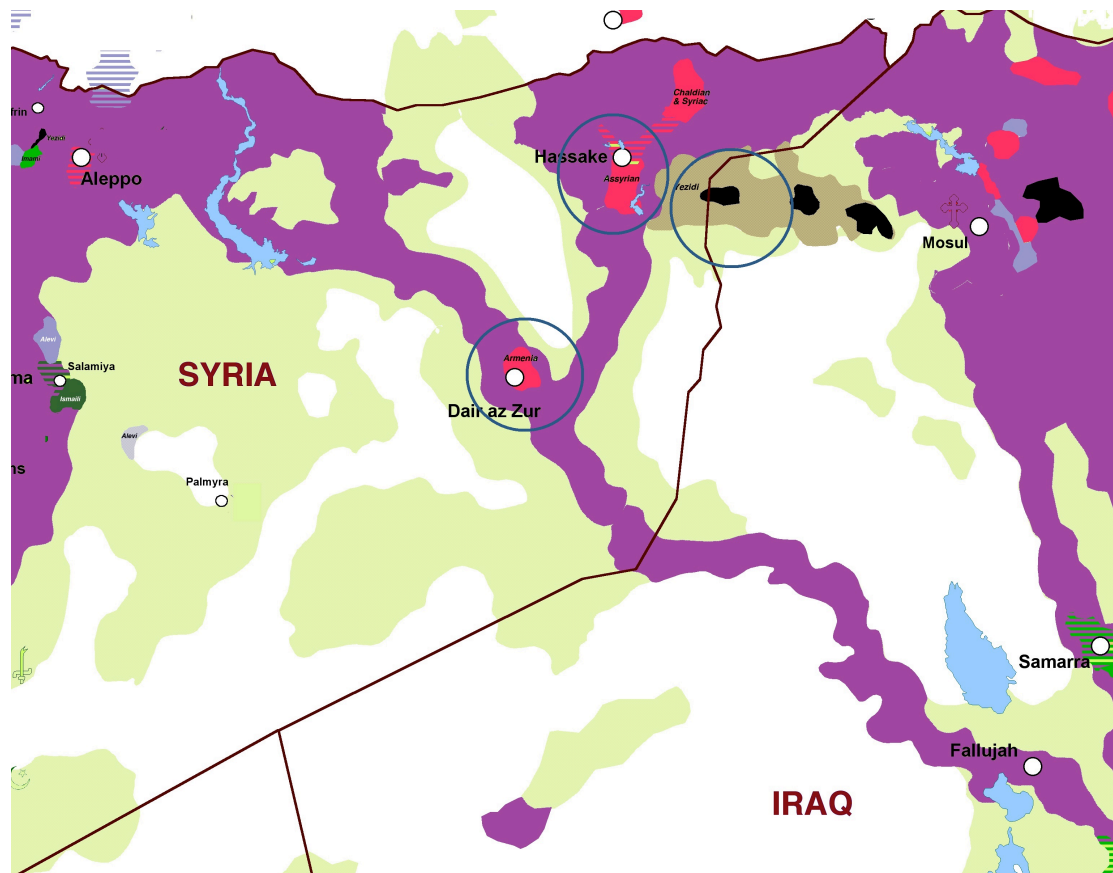


Figure 1: Populations are colour coded according to religion. The three circled spots highlight the Christians in Deir az Zur and Hassakeh, and Yazidis around Sinjar area; Source: This map is based on information obtained from Michael Izady, Gulf/2000project website

These developments have been devastating especially for cultural minorities. Communities of the region are disappearing from their traditional and historic homes and dispersing across the geographic map. A most prominent case of such cultural displacement has been that of the Christians of the region among many others. This report does not delve in extensive profiling of each of these cases, since its primary concern remains a conceptual one. Brief profiles of Sabeen Mandeans, Yazidis, Christians of Syria and Iraq have been included in the Appendix. To mention just one of these cases, the expulsion of the entirety of Mosul's Christian population in 2014, after their

continuous history of over 1600 years in that city has been a symbolic development in a trend which is otherwise much more pervasive.

The Regional Context and Its Implications for Cultural Security: The Policy Response

The displacement of minorities in Syria and Iraq shows that there exists a situation whereby the minorities are told to give up their culture in order to have (a degree of) what is understood to be human security i.e. freedom from fear, freedom from want, and freedom to live in dignity. If the Yazidis, for example, give up their cultural security – and convert to the faith of their tormentors – they can ostensibly have a degree of human security, as per our normative understanding of it. The only choice that they are essentially left with is to get killed or get displaced en masse.

Therefore what is observed here is that the normative conception of the human security concept, as it stands at the moment, breaks down. There exists almost a situation of barter between cultural security and human security, so that identity may be exchanged for the three freedoms. And this situation makes our conception of human security extremely problematic in practice.

The second issue, that is specific to these cultural minorities, is that their collective identity and their culture is fundamentally tied to their lands. The act of displacement therefore brings about the ontological death of the community. A Yazidi resettled in Barcelona is Yazidi no more. As one Yazidi named Hadi Baba Sheikh said in an interview, "To us, land is part of God, and I am part of this land, and the land here is blessed. We will not last without it" (Abouzeid). There are other examples too, such as the fact that exile threatens to dilute an ancient way of life and the traditions that underpin the Yazidi faith. Every Yazidi, for instance, must be baptized in the water of one of two sacred springs (which non-Yazidis are forbidden to see) (Abouzeid). This makes their displacement and the prospect of mass migration a much deeper issue than just the pain of losing one's home.

Thirdly, in the sphere of international law, and under the auspices of the UN, there already exists precedence for the protection of individuals who have been displaced on cultural grounds. This precedence is in the form of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees which provides for protection on grounds of identity based threats (see Appendix). The problem, however, is that such protection comes into force only after the fact

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of displacement. And as highlighted above, for such minority communities, in order for protection to be meaningful, it must come into force in situ, before they are forced into displacement and to consequently lose their culture by breaking their connection with their land.

Given this premise, of the conceptual crisis of human security, of the ontological implications of displacement for minorities, and of the pre-existing legal precedence, the way such protection may be enacted in situ is by the inclusion of the notion of cultural security in an expanded and more robust human security framework.

Therefore freedom from fear, freedom from want and freedom to live in dignity is meaningless unless there is also the freedom to re-negotiate identity – collectively and individually. In order to make the human security approach robust and in sync with political reality, it ought to be expanded to include a rigorous notion of cultural security as well.

Conclusion

The futility of the idea of clash of civilizations on the one hand, and multiculturalism or assimilationist approaches on the other, has been demonstrated with greater force in the post-9/11 period than at any time before. This futility stems from the fact these ideas are based on the highly problematic assumption of static cultures and static collective identities – multiculturalism as well as assimilationist policies assume rigid cultural boundaries, so does the idea of cultural or civilizational clash. These irresolutions of the post-colonial period may only be settled if we develop a universal recognition of the fluidity of identity whereby the allowance to re-negotiate individual and collective identities is enshrined in the new Rights of Man – this will only be a much belated realization of a world that is fluid by nature and therefore contrary to unflinching standards, fixed borders, and security regimes that aid their persistence. Humans are truly secure when they are at liberty to be, and to become, of their own free will. The true function of an effective human security regime is therefore to create and foster the conditions that allow all to be and none to threaten the freedom of others from being or becoming; this is a precarious balance, which may in practice always be a utopian condition. This idea of ontological security – the most fundamental freedom of being and becoming – which remains absent in the normative conception of human security, is hereby articulated as “cultural security” with the intent of making human security a more robust and fuller notion. It is therefore once again, and as a concluding remark,

stressed that it is the intent of human security that makes it relevant in an international political reality where the state remains the only real actor. And this then also puts the burden of truth on the intent to be uncompromising and undiluted in its intellectual rigor.

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Sixty-sixth session
Agenda items 14 and 117

Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 10 September 2012

[without reference to a Main Committee (A/66/L.55/Rev.1 and Add.1)]

66/290. Follow-up to paragraph 143 on human security of the 2005 World Summit Outcome

The General Assembly,

Reaffirming its commitment to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, and international law,

Recalling the 2005 World Summit Outcome,¹ especially paragraph 143 thereof, and its resolution 64/291 of 16 July 2010,

Recognizing that development, human rights and peace and security, which are the three pillars of the United Nations, are interlinked and mutually reinforcing,

1. *Takes note with appreciation* of the report of the Secretary-General on follow-up to General Assembly resolution 64/291 on human security;²

2. *Takes note* of the formal debate on human security organized by the President of the General Assembly, held on 4 June 2012;

3. *Agrees* that human security is an approach to assist Member States in identifying and addressing widespread and cross-cutting challenges to the survival, livelihood and dignity of their people. Based on this, a common understanding on the notion of human security includes the following:

(a) The right of people to live in freedom and dignity, free from poverty and despair. All individuals, in particular vulnerable people, are entitled to freedom from fear and freedom from want, with an equal opportunity to enjoy all their rights and fully develop their human potential;

(b) Human security calls for people-centred, comprehensive, context-specific and prevention-oriented responses that strengthen the protection and empowerment of all people and all communities;

(c) Human security recognizes the interlinkages between peace, development and human rights, and equally considers civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights;

(d) The notion of human security is distinct from the responsibility to protect and its implementation;

(e) Human security does not entail the threat or the use of force or coercive measures. Human security does not replace State security;

(f) Human security is based on national ownership. Since the political, economic, social and cultural conditions for human security vary significantly across and within countries, and at different points in time, human security strengthens national solutions which are compatible with local realities;

(g) Governments retain the primary role and responsibility for ensuring the survival, livelihood and dignity of their citizens. The role of the international community is to complement and provide the necessary support to Governments, upon their request, so as to strengthen their capacity to respond to current and emerging threats. Human security requires greater collaboration and partnership among Governments, international and regional organizations and civil society;

(h) Human security must be implemented with full respect for the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, including full respect for the sovereignty of States, territorial integrity and non-interference in matters that are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of States. Human security does not entail additional legal obligations on the part of States;

4. *Recognizes* that while development, peace and security and human rights are the pillars of the United Nations and are interlinked and mutually reinforcing, achieving development is a central goal in itself and the advancement of human security should contribute to realizing sustainable development as well as the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals;

5. *Acknowledges* the contributions made so far by the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security, and invites Member States to consider voluntary contributions to the Trust Fund;

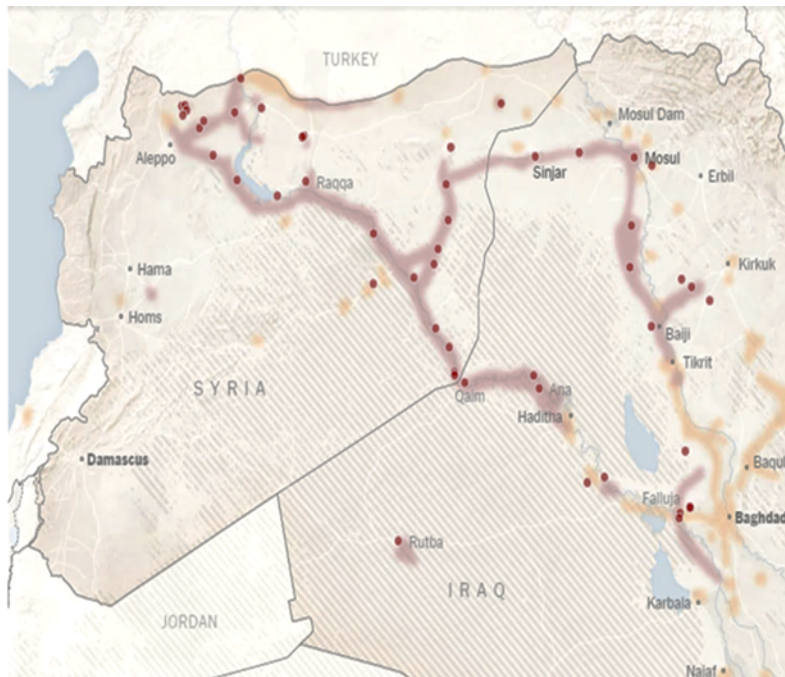
6. *Affirms* that projects funded by the Trust Fund should receive the consent of the recipient State and be in line with national strategies and priorities in order to ensure national ownership;

7. *Decides* to continue its discussion on human security in accordance with the provisions of the present resolution;

8. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session a report on the implementation of the present resolution, seeking the views of Member States in that regard for inclusion in the report, and on the lessons learned on the human security experiences at the international, regional and national levels.

*127th plenary meeting
10 September 2012*

ISIS and Sunni Population Comparative



Sources: Caerus Associates, Long War Journal, Institute for the Study of War

Figure 2: Map of ISIS controlled or heavily affected territories; Source: The New York Times

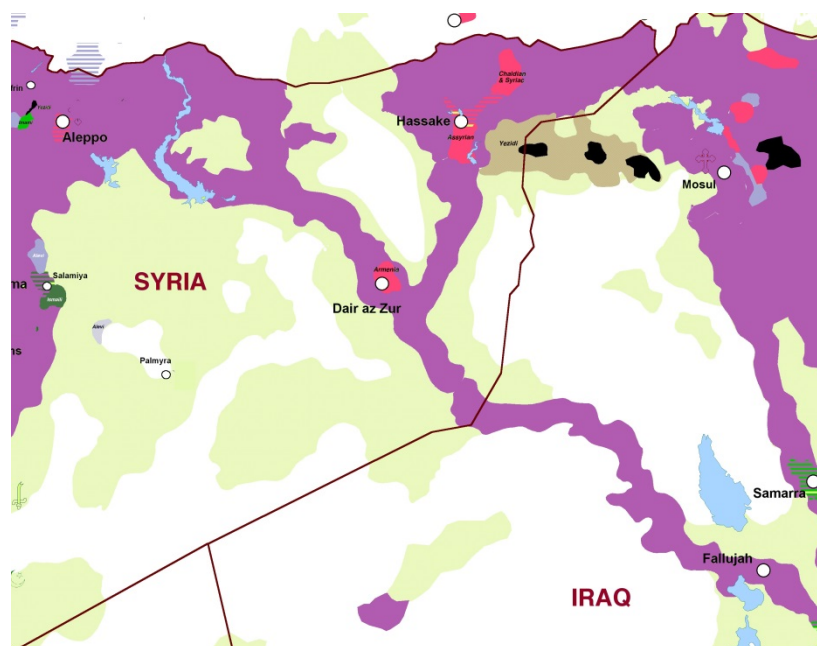


Figure 3: Spread of Sunni population colour coded in Purple; Source: Based on information from Michael Izady, Gulf/2000 project website

Baghdad (2003/2010)¹⁴

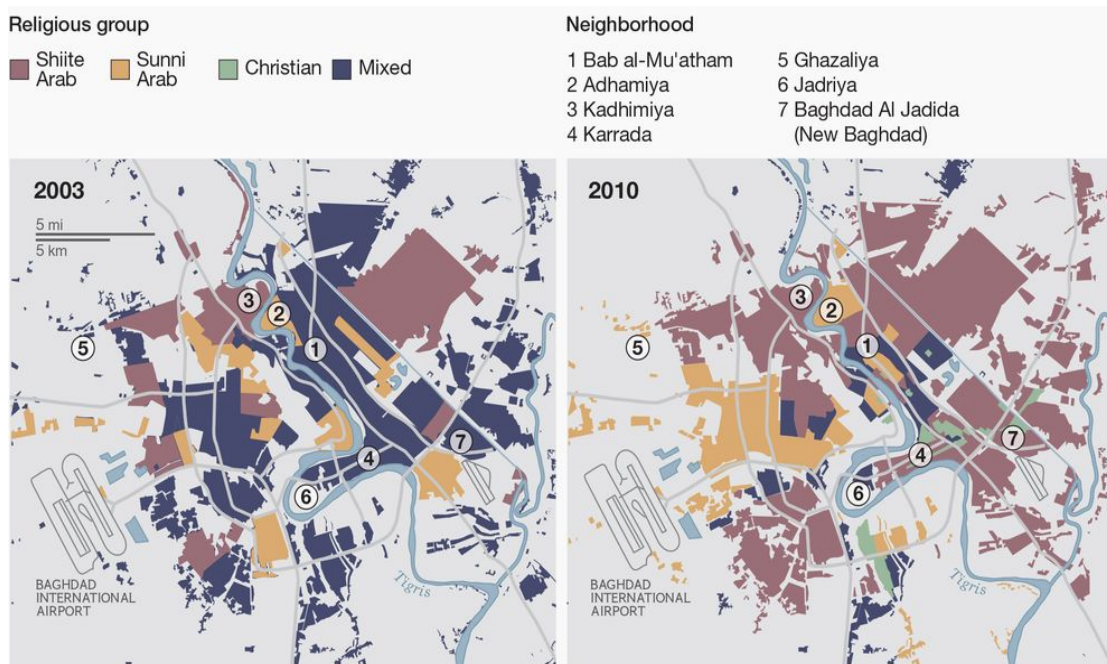


Figure 4: Sectarian cleansing in Baghdad; Source: National Geographic

Minority Profiles

Yazidis¹⁵

- Ethnic Kurds
- Their current practice can be traced back to Sheikh Adi (1073–1163), a Muslim Sufi scholar who established the Sufi Adawiyya order.
- By the fifteenth century, a separate Yazidi religion had developed, which to this day is handed down generation to generation by an oral tradition, primarily through religious chants.
- 518,000 Yazidis lived in northern Iraq before the recent conflict, 300,000 of them in the Sinjar region alone
- Victim of attacks by radical Islamists ever since the US invasion of Iraq in 2003
- Nearly 3,000 killed during recent Islamic State extermination campaign.
- The United Nations does not have a specific figure for the number of displaced Yazidis, because it is considering Iraqis as a whole and not differentiating among the country's various religious communities
- Some reports suggest that at least 100,000 have fled north to Iraqi Kurdistan and Kurdish-controlled Syria

¹⁴ The neighbourhoods have been colour coded according to religion.

¹⁵ Sources: "Demonized and eternally misunderstood", Qantara.de

The Displacement of Minorities in Syria and Iraq

Sabeian Mandeans¹⁶

- Mostly confined to lower Iraq, except for minuscule communities in western Iran
- The religion is a form of Gnosticism, descended from ancient Mesopotamian worship, with rituals that resemble those of Zoroastrian and Nestorian worship
- Sabeian Mandaean faith bars the use of violence or the carrying of weapons.
- Before the U.S. invasion approximately 30,000 Mandeans lived in Iraq.
- Prior to the latest crisis, 20,000 were refugees in Syria and Iraq
- Today the number in Iraq may be lower than 3,500
- Targeted by both state-sponsored Shi'a militias and Salafist jihadists

Christians of Syria¹⁷

- Syria
- Deir ez Zor
- Pre-civil war population of 1.8 million
- At least 500,000 have been displaced
- This year Jabhat al-Nusra blew up the great Armenian church in Deir el-Zour, which is dedicated to the one and a half million Armenians slaughtered by the Turks during the 1915 genocide. All of the church archives, dating back to 1841 and containing thousands of documents on the Armenian Holocaust, were burned to ashes, while the bones of hundreds of genocide victims, packed into the church's crypt in memory of the mass killings 99 years ago, were thrown into the street beside the ruins.
- ISIS fighters control most of Deir Ez zor province, but half of its capital remains in government hands.
- Many of the Armenian Christians in Syria have been displaced; nearly 12,000 have taken refuge in Armenia according to UNHCR
- Homs
- Pre-conflict population of 160,000
- Less than a 1,000 left

¹⁶ Sources: World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples; "Religious Minorities Under Siege in Iraq", Huffington Post

¹⁷ Sources: "UNHCR Regional Profile: Armenia"; "The Suffering of Christians in Syria", Catholic World Report; "Jabhat al-Nusra blows up Armenian church in Deir el-Zour: A savage blow that echoes through Armenian history", The Independent

Christians of Iraq¹⁸

- Iraq
- Pre-2003 population of around 1.5 million
- Now under 400,000
- Mosul
- According to estimates, 60,000 Christians lived in Mosul before the U.S. invasion in 2003.
- In October 2008 alone around 13,000 Christians fled Mosul
- IS after taking over Mosul on June 10th, 2014 issued an ultimatum which was set to expire on July 19th
- Christians were told to convert or face death
- 17,000 were left at the time the ultimatum was issued.
- Today for the first time in over 1600 years the city has been emptied of Christians.

¹⁸ Sources: "The Christians of Iraq and Syria", The Economist; "Iraqi Christians' flee violence, fear end of long history", Reuters

1951 Refugee Convention

Convention relating to the Status of Refugees

Adopted on 28 July 1951 by the United Nations Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Status of Refugees and Stateless Persons convened under General Assembly resolution 429 (V) of 14 December 1950
Entry into force: 22 April 1954, in accordance with article 43

"Chapter I

GENERAL PROVISIONS

Article 1 - Definition of the term "refugee"

- A. For the purposes of the present Convention, the term "refugee" shall apply to any person who:
- (1) Has been considered a refugee under the Arrangements of 12 May 1926 and 30 June 1928 or under the Conventions of 28 October 1933 and 10 February 1938, the Protocol of 14 September 1939 or the Constitution of the International Refugee Organization; Decisions of non-eligibility taken by the International Refugee Organization during the period of its activities shall not prevent the status of refugee being accorded to persons who fulfil the conditions of paragraph 2 of this section;
 - (2) As a result of events occurring before 1 January 1951 and **owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion**, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it."

1967 Protocol:

Removes geographic and temporal restrictions on the 1951 convention.

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