

# MAPPING NEEDS OF YAZIDI WOMEN IN SINJAR AND DISPLACED COMMUNITIES

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IOM Iraq deeply appreciates the key informant's time and perspectives.

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## ACRONYMS

<b>CBO</b>	Community Based Organization
<b>CRSV</b>	Conflict related sexual violence
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organization
<b>FGD</b>	Focus Group Discussion
<b>GoI</b>	Government of Iraq
<b>IDP</b>	Internally Displaced Persons
<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration
<b>ISIL</b>	Islamic State of Iraq and Levant
<b>KI</b>	Key informant
<b>KII</b>	Key informant Interview
<b>KRG</b>	Kurdistan Regional Government
<b>KRI</b>	Kurdistan Region of Iraq
<b>MHPSS</b>	Mental health and psychosocial support
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organization
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNAMI</b>	United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In October, 2020, the government of Iraq (Gol) and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) announced a new agreement for the management of Sinjar. The agreement, which was broken into three components - security, administration, and reconstruction - and laid out key points related to achieving power-sharing between the KRG and Gol in Sinjar district.<sup>1</sup> The Agreement, which was supported by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI),<sup>2</sup> was greeted positively by the international community,<sup>3</sup> including the United States and Turkey, as a path to normalize governance in the district. However, the Agreement itself has been criticized by Yazidi leaders for failing to involve the people of Sinjar in the design and negotiation process, typified by a statement issued less than a month after the Agreement was announced by a group of Yazidi political elites, community leaders, and civil society representations expressing their dissatisfaction with the Agreement.<sup>4</sup> While their statement lays out both the positives and negatives of the agreement and welcomes the political prioritization of Sinjar, it notes that “Yazidis were not consulted as required” and advocates that “the current reality of the various groups living in Sinjar should be taken into consideration.”

### KEY FINDINGS

In general, women across all three communities reported having only a surface-level knowledge about the Sinjar Agreement, with most noting their sources of information came from social media, news, and discussions with peers. Few reported having read the Agreement directly themselves.

Women from both IDP and returnee communities noted that since the Agreement was developed independently of the community and did not envisage a role for the community in its implementation, and also lacked concrete benchmarks or a clear timeline, it lacked legitimacy. Most women viewed the Agreement as politically motivated, designed to make it appear as though the Iraqi and Kurdistan Regional governments are taking steps to secure Sinjar while limiting calls for accountability on the conditions that led to the fall of Sinjar to ISIL in 2014. Overall, the Agreement was perceived as unlikely to change the daily realities on the ground in Sinjar.

Despite a strong sense among respondents that the Agreement was unlikely to impact realities on the ground, IDP and returnee women had clear views on how to strengthen community participation in the Agreement, increase the role of women in the Agreement, and improve the administration, governance, and reconstruction of Sinjar. Diaspora women were much less engaged on these issues.

Recognizing the importance of including the voices of community members and specifically women in peace agreements, IOM initiated this research study to understand the perspectives of Yazidi women in Sinjar towards the Sinjar Peace Agreement. This study aims to create a community-level understanding of the Sinjar Agreement and specifically the concerns that women hold regarding its terms, as well as a comparative view regarding what Sinjari women themselves consider as the most pressing needs in the district of Sinjar in relation to the three components of the Agreement: security, administration, and reconstruction. Through a series of interviews, focus group discussions, and broader consultations with 34 Sinjari women – including 11 who had returned to Sinjar, 20 still displaced, and 3 resettled and living in diaspora communities – the study aims to paint a picture of the hopes women hold for security, governance, and reconstruction of Sinjar, and how they feel women could help to accomplish these goals.

With regard to the administration of Sinjar, women from both IDP and returnee communities expressed concern that an agreement between federal Iraq and the Kurdistan Region would lead to the appointment of a mayor who did not have support at the community level, and whose appointment may be connected to greater political motives of either the KRG or Baghdad. In order to ensure that the nominated mayor had community buy-in, respondents suggested that the Gol and KRG should jointly implement a community-led nomination process, an electoral process, or inclusion of Yazidi community leaders in the selection committee.

IDP women were more likely to insist that women should be represented directly in the mayoral selection committee and in the new administration of Sinjar, while women from returnee communities expressed greater trust in specific community leaders acting as spokespeople for their perspectives, and stated that they were more concerned about the direct representation of Yazidis in local government. This may be because IDP women have more direct interactions with government, and thus are more concerned with ensuring a safe environment for women to access services, while men do the majority of the government interaction within the returnee communities.

1. [https://shafaq.com/en/Iraq-News/Text-of-Sinjar-agreement?fbclid=IwAR214reXDpNk9itf49feDy\\_wLsknLGHarrdG-DtU-t6zo9jZ-Bw1TwahyTI](https://shafaq.com/en/Iraq-News/Text-of-Sinjar-agreement?fbclid=IwAR214reXDpNk9itf49feDy_wLsknLGHarrdG-DtU-t6zo9jZ-Bw1TwahyTI)

2. <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/the-sinjar-agreement-has-good-ideas-but-is-it-a-dead-end/>

3. <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2020/10/iraq-erbil-kurdistan-kr-g-baghdad-sinjar-nineveh-yazidis.html>

4. <https://www.ezidi-documentation.org/statement-of-yazidi-elitesleadersand-institutions-regarding-the-sinjar-agreement-between-baghdad-and-erbil/>

Sinjar's status as a disputed territory also led women to express fears of a repeat of policies of Arabization to strengthen federal Iraq's claim to Sinjar. Women living in Sinjar expressed concern that similar demographic shifts could take place to favor the Kurdish community if the appointed mayor held pro-KRG leanings, but according to focus group respondents, Sinjar's placement within Ninewa governorate and Gol's greater historical claims to the area meant that fears of Arabization were more pronounced.

Respondents raised a number of administrative priorities, such as: creating increased opportunities for women to participate in local governance, such as allowing women to serve as mukhtars; amending the Iraqi constitution to allow Yazidis to serve as judges; and re-classifying Sinjar as a governorate from a district to ensure greater self-determination. Within the diaspora community, women's primary concerns were to ensure all persons in Sinjar, including those who are not politically affiliated and marginalized groups such as women and youth, have the opportunity to be involved in decision-making processes.

On security, respondents generally preferred the idea of a local police force taking responsibility for the internal security of Sinjar. Women spoke of the importance of a representative, diverse, and of-the-community police force and the need for greater inclusion of women in the police force to help women to access security services. One woman in Sinjar specifically noted the need to strengthen the community policing program and increase its profile in Sinjar, as she saw it as a potential access point for women, but acknowledged that most women in Sinjar, including those who participated in the focus group, had never heard of or accessed the program.

Women from both IDP and returnee communities expressed a great deal of support for the removal of armed groups from the city limits and the withdrawal of the PKK, but had complex feelings around how this would be conducted, how security would be guaranteed, and who would take their place. In particular, women residing in Sinjar expressed concern about the Peshmerga and Iraqi army taking the place of these militias, since they feared it would recreate the same conditions that led to Sinjar's fall to ISIL.

Women stated that the Agreement should directly address the unique security risks faced by Yazidi women, such as the heightened risk of conflict related sexual violence (CRSV), including physical harm, sexual assault and exploitation, rape,

and kidnapping. Other security concerns raised by women (and unaddressed by the Agreement) included the lack of coordination of legal systems between KRG and Gol that create security gaps allowing for ISIS members and affiliates to evade justice; decision making and responsibility for addressing ISIL-affiliated families and children; and the return of Iraqi families from Al Hol Camp in Syria to a new camp in Ninewa.

Particularly within Sinjar, women reported having an informal, though shared, consensus for next steps on community-based plan for establishing security, which they said had been ignored in the Agreement process. Their community-based plan requested the removal not only of armed groups, but of political parties and associated organizations to allow for grassroots political parties to grow. They also requested the removal of both KRG and Iraqi affiliated military and intelligence services in favor of an internationally led investigation into the role of both militaries and governments in the fall of Sinjar, in order to achieve accountability and transitional justice for the Yazidi community.

While some women noted the need for a local, independent military for Sinjar, others saw this as the perpetuation of militia rule and instead requested the presence of UN Peacekeepers to serve as a neutral military presence in the area.

Women spoke at length about the lack of job opportunities and education in Sinjar, as well as poor living conditions, and the fact that this was creating opportunities for recruitment of vulnerable people into armed groups. They also expressed concern that organizations and women's councils also sometimes served as proxies for armed groups, allowing them to recruit from vulnerable families who were seeking basic services or support.

Finally, respondents also stressed that the local Yazidi community needed to be present in the committee for prioritizing reconstruction and development efforts. This was seen as particularly important because of the role that the lack of reconstruction plays in both the governance and security of Sinjar. Women felt that reconstruction as led by a committee composed of only KRG and Iraqi government officials but without local representation would again create opportunities for demographic shifts as a result of prioritization of areas for development in the city.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Administrative

- Continue to work to advocate for greater community inclusion, and particularly the inclusion of women's and youth voices in the political process through capacity building.
- Help create space for representatives of the community to provide feedback on the Agreement and its implementation over time.
- Work with government offices from both KRG and federal Iraq to increase their capacity in community involvement and participatory decision making.

### Security

- Strengthen the role of the community policing program in Sinjar to ensure that women have a safe outlet to express their security concerns.
- Work with the local government to ensure that the community policing unit is included as a part of the scale up of local policing in Sinjar, and model the community diversity and representation that was requested.
- Strengthen programming related to protection and women's

role in peace and security, since these were top issues of concern for respondents. This may include strengthening MHPSS and CRSV support programming.

- Conduct capacity building of organizations engaging in MHPSS and CRSV and provide long-term funding that allows for multi-phase programming

### Reconstruction

- Establish a community committee of diverse voices to determine prioritization for rehabilitation and reconstruction activities to provide to organizations engaged in this work.

### Advocacy and Implementation

- Advocate for the inclusion of local voices in the Agreement's implementation, providing international pressure on the local governments to be responsive to the needs of the community as part of an international coalition.
- Support the government to establish benchmarks and accountability mechanisms to ensure the Agreement's implementation.

## OVERVIEW OF THE SINJAR AGREEMENT

Following months of negotiation between the Kurdistan Regional Government and the government of Iraq (GoI),<sup>5</sup> under the guidance of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, on 9 October 2020, an Agreement for Stability and Normalization of Conditions in Sinjar<sup>6</sup> was signed between Baghdad and Erbil, setting out broad points of agreement to resolve longstanding issues related to the administration, security, and reconstruction of the district. While the Agreement can be considered an important step forward, it evoked quite a strong reaction from the Sinjaris – and especially among different Yazidi factions in and outside of Sinjar – who did not feel that there had been sufficient consultation with the affected community.

Different Yazidi stakeholders have come together to articulate their concerns and demands (e.g. for example, a letter of 26 Yazidi "Elites, Leaders, and Institutions" and the meeting of a Yazidi delegation with Iraqi Prime Minister (PM) Al-Kadhimi and presenting him a list of 19 demands), but opportunities for community feedback have been limited.

The Agreement itself is broken into three components: administrative, security, and reconstruction. The administrative section included two points: the selection of a new and independent

mayor for Sinjar, and the formation of a joint committee between KRG and federal Iraq for the selection of other governmental and judiciary positions.

The security section included three points: first, that the local police and national security and intelligence agencies shall be exclusively responsible for security in Sinjar; second, that the security apparatus will be strengthened by adding 2,500 new security force jobs, including an allocation for displaced community members; and third, the removal of Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) from the area.

The final component of the Agreement, reconstruction, lays out the formation of a joint committee between KRG and federal Iraq to restore reconstruction and reconstruction activities in coordination with the local administration of Ninewa, to be tasked by the federal Prime Minister and the Kurdistan Region Council of Ministers.

Finally, the Agreement concludes by stating that a field committee will be established between KRG and federal Iraq to follow up on the implementation of the points detailed above.

5. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/10/1075102>

6. [https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/the-sinjar-agreement-has-good-ideas-but-is-it-a-dead-end/https://shafaq.com/en/Iraq-News/Text-of-Sinjar-agreement?fbclid=IwAR214reXDpNk9itf49feDy\\_wLsknLGHarrdG-DtU-t6zo9jZ-Bw1TwahyTI](https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/the-sinjar-agreement-has-good-ideas-but-is-it-a-dead-end/https://shafaq.com/en/Iraq-News/Text-of-Sinjar-agreement?fbclid=IwAR214reXDpNk9itf49feDy_wLsknLGHarrdG-DtU-t6zo9jZ-Bw1TwahyTI)

## METHODOLOGY

### IDENTIFYING PARTICIPANTS

Identification of research participants was critical to ensure the success of the project in order to ensure a diversity of voices and experiences on women's peace and security issues in Sinjar. In order to accomplish this, a network map of known women's rights actors in Sinjar and in displaced communities was created using snowball sampling methodology.<sup>7</sup> Informal interviews with actors working with and for these communities were undertaken in order to ensure that key voices were present. Interview and

focus group discussion participants were identified through the researcher's known networks, IOM's known networks, and through interviews and recommendations from key informants familiar with the community. Once a comprehensive network map was created, inclusive both of potential research subjects and of possible gaps, the researcher coordinated with IOM to identify focus group participants and locations.

### DATA COLLECTION APPROACH

Data collection was completed through focus group and individual interview sessions to collect feedback from Yazidi women on their needs and concerns related to the future security, administration, and governance of Sinjar.

For data collection, the consultant designed two tools: one for focus group discussions and one for key informant interviews to gain more individualized perspectives of female community leaders. These tools built off existing knowledge from previously conducted research on civil society in Ninewa, as well as from

the network mapping of potential focus group and consultation subjects, delving deeper into the distinct needs of women and survivors in Sinjar as well as those displaced from Sinjar. Two focus groups were held with displaced community leaders in Duhok, and one with returnee women in Sinjar to develop comprehensive and gender sensitive demands and recommendations for the three frameworks of the peace agreement (administration, security, and reconstruction).

### DATA COLLECTION METHODS

#### Mapping

In order to fully understand the actors in Sinjar and displaced communities who contributed their feedback through focus groups and key informant interviews, as well as to more fully understand the actors on the ground, a mapping tool was designed to track not only the presence and any known affiliation of leading women's voices and advocates in Sinjar and displaced communities, but also serve as a living document to be updated throughout the research process to understand their feelings on the Sinjar agreement, peace, and security in the area.

#### Interviews

Interviews were conducted with civil society actors in Sinjar and Duhok working on women's rights issues and with displaced communities in order to get a baseline understanding of the concerns that were to be reflected in the focus group discussions, to better refine the tools, and to identify possible women's rights advocates or organizations both in Sinjar and in displaced communities to participate in focus group discussions (FGDs) who were not previously known to the researcher or IOM. Interviews were also conducted using a semi-structured framework along the same three axes, allowing participants the opportunity to speak freely on their perceptions, concerns, or ideas with regard to women's peace and security, as well as to make recommendations for areas of inquiry. In total, ten interviews were conducted (6 with displaced women and four with returnee women) to gain individualized insight into the concerns and perspectives of women with regards to the agreement.

Finally, three individual interviews were conducted with women from the diaspora community to gain insights into how their impressions differ from those of the local community with regards to the Sinjar agreement, as well as to better understand their impressions of the current administrative, reconstruction, and security needs of Sinjar.

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7. Snowball sampling is a process of participant recruitment in which a few known participants recommend, if known, potential additional participants and recruit them to participate in the study.



## Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

Focus groups were conducted in order to obtain a variety of perspectives, understanding of points of disagreement or contention, and areas of consensus among women's group actors in Sinjar and displaced communities and participants' understanding of how their needs intersect with stabilization and peacebuilding. Focus groups were conducted in person with individuals who had direct involvement with Yazidi women's rights issues in Sinjar and Duhok.

FGD participants were selected based upon the following criteria:

- Degree of direct knowledge of and involvement in Yazidi women's issues in Sinjar and displaced communities
- Diversity of background

## RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

While this research sought to determine a comprehensive understanding of women in positions of community leadership on the Sinjar Agreement, the sensitivity of the topic led to several research limitations. First, given the social and political sensitivities of Sinjar among Iraq and the KRI, responses on the role of and community trust in specific armed groups remained quite vague in both interviews and focus groups, with women choosing to speak more in generalities about "armed groups" or "militias" rather than naming specific groups. Additionally, within the IDP communities, critique of the KRG was noticeably lighter than for women in returnee communities living in Sinjar. There is no real way to differentiate whether this perception difference is due to the services and relative security experienced by IDP women in KRI or whether women living in KRI felt discomfort openly addressing critiques of the government hosting them. Likely, it is a combination of both.

Additionally, women's perceptions on the Sinjar Agreement were based largely on secondhand information and summary points they had seen on the news and in social media, or from conversations with friends. Only a very small minority of women interviewed or who participated in focus groups noted having read the Agreement in full, so while their feedback on the Agreement is meaningful in order to capture their priorities and concerns, there were fewer examples of technical engagement with the document. For most women, the Agreement was seen as politicking by the United Nations, Iraqi government, and KRG, rather than a meaningful document intended to lay out a roadmap. This perspective made clear mapping of positions a challenge.

Each FGD consisted of approximately 7-10 participants. Two focus groups took place in Kurdish (one in Duhok and one in Sinjar), with one (in Duhok) completed in Arabic. In total, two focus groups were conducted in Duhok with women's rights activists from within the Yazidi and Sinjari community, as well as one in Sinjar itself with returnee women community leaders. A smaller focus group had been planned virtually with members of the diaspora community from Sinjar, in coordination with IOM Germany, but this was not possible due to a low number of participants willing to engage in the process. Respondents from the diaspora noted an array of reasons for why they were unwilling to join, including a lack of knowledge about or interest in discussing politics, a lack of availability, and a lack of confidence in the role that research can play in implementing change and research fatigue. Instead, three women agreed to participate in this process, and so individual interviews were conducted with diaspora members to accommodate their low number.

Finally, Sinjari and Yazidi women from both IDP and returnee communities feel a high degree of mistrust in decision makers at all levels, including toward the United Nations and IOM, and reported experiencing research fatigue. While this sense of mistrust was not as high among the diaspora community, the sense of research fatigue was shared, with many women refusing to participate as they had participated in numerous research projects on the needs of Sinjar but did not believe that anything had changed as a result. Within the IDP and returnee communities, the sentiment was stronger, with even those who agreed to participate expressing that their communities feel that their needs are not being met and that many of them had sat for research similar to this one previously and felt that no tangible benefit would come from participating. While most participants still engaged with the process, at least two focus group participants did not give any sort of substantive feedback, and in all focus groups and the vast majority of interviews, participants expressed frustration in sitting for more research rather than engaging in concrete actions. It is worth considering that this frustration and research fatigue likely impacts both the quality of information gathered, as well as the psychosocial wellbeing of participants in the research process.

## FINDINGS

### OVERALL PERCEPTIONS

Overall, the vast majority of women, whether from IDP, returnee, or diaspora communities, reported having only a surface level understanding of the Agreement, while noting that there were some positives and some negatives to the Agreement as they understood it. When pressed for why they hadn't read the Agreement themselves, women from all three communities reported feeling that it was simply "words on paper" unlikely to be implemented or to have a tangible impact on women's day to day lives. The chance of perceiving day-to-day implications of the Agreement seemed to directly correlate with the likelihood of having read the Agreement itself, with the highest percentage of women reporting having read it living in Sinjar, a lower percentage in IDP communities, and none having reported reading it directly in the diaspora community. This is likely due to women's proximity and the perceived impact that the Agreement could have on their lives. This was especially true for IDP and diaspora women, who noted mostly having read summaries of the Agreement on social media and having limited conversations with friends or family. The community in Sinjar, given the more immediate potential impact of the Agreement on their lives, had more understanding of the details and were more likely to have read both it and the response statement from the Yazidi elders in full. Despite this more detailed understanding, most still indicated that they were unlikely to have a deep understanding of the implications of the Agreement.

Overall, both IDP and returnee women reported viewing the Agreement as largely negative, less for what it contains than what it lacks, including a detailed action plan, timeline, and allocation of responsibility for next steps. Diaspora women were less willing to take a strong position on the Agreement, focusing on the idea that finding a solution for Sinjar was good and that the Agreement would be a challenge to implement and require external support and motivation from the international community. To IDP and returnee communities, however, the brevity of the Agreement

### PERCEPTIONS OF ADMINISTRATION

While the Agreement lays out goals for administration of the city, specifically around the appointment of a singular independent mayor, it fails to lay out the benchmarks and pathway toward that happening or resolving the current administrative conflict in the district. The Agreement includes language about forming a committee between the KRG and federal Iraq<sup>8</sup> to ensure an appropriate appointment of the mayor and other governmental positions, but, as noted by both the statement issued by Yazidi community leaders, and by focus group and interview

reinforces the idea that it will continue to have little impact. Particularly for women living in Sinjar, the Agreement is perceived as being pushed by the United Nations in order to create the illusion of responsiveness to the Sinjar situation.

Those living in Sinjar noted that the community had requested a process through community leaders following the reclamation of Sinjar with concrete steps for re-establishing governance and administration, safety and security, and reconstruction. These steps, which were not integrated into the Agreement included an impartial international investigation into the roles of both KRG and federal Iraq to determine their culpability in allowing Sinjar to fall to ISIL, which would open the doors to both the international recognition of the genocide and to transitional justice and reconstruction. The process they outlined was one rooted in research and fact-finding as a baseline for any agreement, while their general perception of the Sinjar Agreement as it currently stands is that it is designed to minimize acknowledgement of culpability of the KRG and federal Iraq, both in terms of military decisions and government failures, as well as limit efforts toward transitional justice by shifting back to pre-2014 administration of Sinjar.

Given both the noted lack of detailed understanding and the general ambivalence of women toward the Agreement, it is difficult to note a clear stance that the community holds as either for or against its terms. Only one participant in either focus groups or in interviews noted a strongly held bias against the actual terms of the Agreement, and even she noted that while she was against the terms, she did not believe any action would be taken as a result, and thus her objections were more hypothetical than practical. As such, the feedback on the Agreement as laid out in this section is designed to capture the overall perceptions of women in IDP and returnee communities on the individual points, shortcomings, and gaps in the Agreement rather than a political analysis of who stands in favor or against it.

participants, it fails to include the participation of the community of Sinjar in the committee, nor does it include clear criteria to ensure that the new administration will be representative of the people. Women in the returnee community presented a number of options to increase representation in the Agreement's implementation, including that the appointment process could include allowing community members to nominate candidates through elections or community leaders to be presented to the committee for final selection.

8. [https://shafaq.com/en/Iraq-News/Text-of-Sinjar-agreement?fbclid=IwAR214reXDpNk9itf49feDy\\_wLsknLGHarrdG-DtU-t6zo9jZ-Bw1TwahyTI](https://shafaq.com/en/Iraq-News/Text-of-Sinjar-agreement?fbclid=IwAR214reXDpNk9itf49feDy_wLsknLGHarrdG-DtU-t6zo9jZ-Bw1TwahyTI)

## Demographic Changes and Political Independence

Within both the IDP communities and returnee communities, women expressed concern that any administration of the area would be determined and allocated either by the KRG or federal Iraq, but would not reflect demographics of the district and instead, given Sinjar's classification as a district, be politically appointed. Given Sinjar's disputed status between KRI and Iraq, women expressed the concern that a politically motivated appointment may push an agenda to shift the demographics of Sinjar to better secure its position as either a part of Iraq or Kurdistan. In order to ensure Sinjar's self-administration and representation, women from both IDP and refugee communities felt the most appropriate way to address this concern was by reclassifying Sinjar from a district to an independent governorate. This would allow the community greater autonomy in its administration and governance and prevent demographic shifts. Women from within Sinjar expressed concern that Yazidis have low representation in government due in part to its designation as a district which allows for appointment of a number of government positions and has continued to deprioritize Yazidi representation without providing opportunities for community input on representation. They also expressed concern that the Islamic basis of the Iraqi constitution prohibits Yazidis from holding certain governmental positions, particularly judiciary positions as well as to the Islamic basis of the Iraqi constitution, which prohibits Yazidis from holding certain governmental positions. This is of particular concern when it comes to the need for justice to be implemented by the local government and the handling of sensitive issues such as suspected ISIL-affiliated families, as Yazidis, despite being the majority community in Sinjar, are not legally allowed to become judges.

## Women's Representation in Government

Additionally, women, particularly those from IDP communities, were concerned about the lack of gender representation in government offices. This was reported as a barrier for women to access services directly, seek employment from government, or run for political office. These barriers were perceived as being either because women's concerns and perspectives may not be taken seriously by men or because an office consisting predominantly of men may create a hostile environment in which a woman may be harassed or assaulted if she tries to gain employment or access services there. This lack of female representation in government extends even to services intended to support women, such as the Office for Combatting Violence Against Women in KRI, or offices intended to support Yazidi survivors, which are headed and operated by men, and thus remain

inaccessible to women despite their missions. IDP women spoke of international organizations as providing support in acting as a mediator or go-between when women in the camps need to access government services. Additionally, women noted that even with regards to the position of mukhtar, a neighborhood representative and leader, women were prohibited from holding the position in Sinjar. This was drawn in contrast to Bashiqa, a similarly Yazidi-majority district where the practice of appointing women as Mukhtars was perceived to be quite normalized. Mukhtars are often the first government officials that communities turn to in Iraq to resolve conflict, so it was thought that allowing women to hold these positions would increase access to direct services.

## Yazidi Representation in Government

While this concern about women's representation in positions of authority was still present for women in Sinjar, it was less pressing to them than the need for Yazidi representation in government, perhaps due to the fact that outside of displaced communities, the responsibility for government interaction tended to fall on the men in the community and was thus quite limited for women. While women interviewed for this research expressed the need for greater women's representation in government, many expressed criticisms of the quota system as a way to guarantee women's inclusion, which a number of women felt often led to the appointment of women who serve political agendas rather than representing and advocating for women's needs. Instead, those who critiqued that system spoke of the need for a governmental system that was welcoming to women both as staff and constituents.

Where women were able to access government services directly, IDP women reported that this was due to "wasta"<sup>9</sup> and was often based on individual connections, rather than institutional policies and procedures. Women's lack of ability to directly request administrative and governmental services was, interestingly, noted by both IDP and returnee communities to be shifting, as generational changes have made it more normalized for women to seek government support themselves directly rather than working through intermediaries such as male family members or organizations. This indicates that there may be opportunities to involve women's voices more directly in decision making at the administrative level as the Agreement is implemented. Women from diaspora communities also spoke to the increased strength of women's voices following the genocide, reiterating that after the traumas they had endured, there is less fear among women than there had been prior to 2014.

9. A system of power based on influence and personal connections to achieve a given objective.

## PERCEPTIONS OF SECURITY

### Policing

While the presence of a local police force was mentioned in the Agreement, little detail is provided regarding where these officers will come from or to define what is meant by “local”<sup>10</sup>. Women from IDP and returnee communities noted the importance of ensuring that any security actors remaining or establishing themselves in Sinjar would need to be from and ethnically and religiously representative of the community. They requested a comprehensive registration process to ensure that members of the police represented not only an increase in women in the police force, but also the presence of Yazidis, Arab Muslims, Kurdish Muslims, and other ethnic groups, who they requested to be represented on the police force in scale with their community’s size in the district.

The Agreement anticipates an increase of 2,500 internal security forces, which should be inclusive of IDPs from camps and returnee communities. However, the women who reported more detailed knowledge about the Agreement noted that the wording did not clarify whether this entire number will come from within the community or whether only a portion of this number would, and one participant noted that this number of 2,500 felt insufficient for the size and population of Sinjar. Additionally, participants noted that police are not currently accessible to women due to the ongoing stigma associated with bringing issues to police rather than handling them within the community or family. One focus group participant in Sinjar did note that the community policing program has a presence in Sinjar and could potentially open doors for women to access services and decrease stigma. However, their presence is not widely known in Sinjar and thus they do not currently have the capacity to play that role. Within the diaspora community, women did not specifically mention police as a part of their perceptions of security in Sinjar, again indicating both a lack of detailed familiarity with the Agreement itself and also a less pragmatic view of security than those directly impacted might have.

### National Security and Intelligence

National security and intelligence services as defined in the Agreement did not specify whether they would be Iraqi or KRG-led or a combination. However, the presence of what would generally be considered to be more legitimate security forces, such as Peshmerga from the KRG or the federal Iraqi Army, did nothing to assuage women’s concerns about ongoing security in the area. Particularly among returnee communities, women reported that as these groups were present in 2014, and they were unable to prevent the fall of Sinjar to ISIL, they

were widely mistrusted to resume responsibility for the security of the district. Instead, women suggested that any military presence in Sinjar would either need to come from within the community itself and be independent of KRG and federal Iraq, or would need to come from the United Nations through UN Peacekeeping Forces. This suggestion is one that indicates the community’s fears of being neither seen as fully Iraqi or Kurdish, and thus vulnerable to both abuses at the hands of these militaries and abandonment should Sinjar need protection again. Particularly for women within Sinjar, the need for an impartial international investigation into the failures of the Peshmerga and Iraqi Army in August 2014 that led to Sinjar’s occupation by ISIL is a critical first step in accountability that would allow for trust to be established and traditional national security forces to be welcomed back into Sinjar. Diaspora women indicated a greater willingness to welcome back more traditional armed forces from both KRG and federal Iraq. Their one criteria was to implement an accountability system and a guarantee of some kind that would prevent troops from retreating from Sinjar should it need to be defended in the future. One member from the diaspora recommended that this could be language incorporated into the Agreement itself, with follow-up to ensure its implementation.

### Armed groups in Sinjar

The Agreement also mentions the removal of all armed groups from within the city limits in Sinjar, which was widely seen as one of the strongest points in the Agreement. However, women noted that there was a lack of clarity within the Agreement about who will be responsible for ensuring their removal and how this will be done in a way that still guarantees security for the city. While language around the removal of PKK from Sinjar in particular was noted in the Agreement, women from both IDP and returnee communities noted that the relationship between the PKK and other armed groups with the federal government were more deeply intertwined than the Agreement addressed. Women from IDP communities indicated that the federal government was at least perceived as paying the salaries of PKK members, and that the lack of basic services in Sinjar and lack of investment in the district creates vacuums that allow for armed groups to recruit and further destabilize the area. Returnee women also noted that the PKK was able to recruit officers from the Iraqi Army due to the pay, which they saw as undermining both the legitimacy and capacity of the army. This service gap and increased vulnerability to recruitment was exacerbated in 2020 when COVID lockdowns led to lack of income.

10. [https://shafaq.com/en/Iraq-News/Text-of-Sinjar-agreement?fbclid=IwAR214reXDpNk9itf49feDy\\_wLsknLGHarrdG-DtU-t6zo9jZ-Bw1TwahyTI](https://shafaq.com/en/Iraq-News/Text-of-Sinjar-agreement?fbclid=IwAR214reXDpNk9itf49feDy_wLsknLGHarrdG-DtU-t6zo9jZ-Bw1TwahyTI)

Women from both returnee and IDP communities also expressed clear concerns about the role of political parties, women's councils, and NGOs, all of which were noted as serving as proxies for armed groups. In particular, women noted that armed groups were successful in recruitment through these institutions because of the lack of basic services, opportunities, or education. One example given by an IDP woman included an NGO that served as a front for the PKK, creating recruitment opportunities through informal education programming for vulnerable youth by posing as offering traditional NGO services. Participants also noted that political parties, many of which were also perceived as fronts for various armed groups, needed to be removed from the city along with armed groups and proxies. They noted that this was necessary in order to disentangle the relationships between armed groups and political parties and allow for local grassroots parties to take root.

### Protection Concerns

Finally, particularly among returnee and IDP women, community understanding of security needs in Sinjar was both more inclusive and more nuanced than reflected in the Sinjar Agreement. While the security section of the Agreement focuses primarily on the armed groups in the district and allocation of a police presence to manage the city's security concerns, women interpreted security threats both to their identities as Yazidis and as women. They noted the fact that women were continuously the most vulnerable in times of conflict, and that Yazidi women in particular are uniquely at risk as a minority community. Women's interpretations of security were more human-centered, noting that women bear the brunt of a lack

of security both in terms of practical risks, such as the threat of physical assault, rape, or kidnapping, and in terms of women's role in the community. Respondents noted that as women, they felt a degree of responsibility over not only themselves, but also their children, husbands, and extended family. As women, they also noted being subject to heightened risk within their own families, including domestic violence, exchange marriages to mitigate community conflicts, and untreated or poorly treated trauma and increased rates of suicidal ideation.<sup>11</sup> Within Sinjar, women spoke of the limitations for women to seek education as a direct consequence of community-level security concerns, as girls would often have to travel to surrounding areas for school and may face safety and security threats along the way. Given the Agreement's relatively militarized framework for addressing security, women saw its terms as insufficient both in scope and in depth, at no point addressing these unique security concerns faced by women, nor does it reflect the challenges that lead to insecurity in the first place.

Additionally, women from within Sinjar noted ongoing security concerns about ISIL-affiliated families and the need to address children of ISIL members, none of which was addressed in the Agreement, as well as the process for the relocation of Al Hol Camp from Syria into Ninewa governorate. Relatedly, women from the IDP communities expressed concern about the lack of coordination on prisoners between federal Iraq and KRI that can often lead to someone being charged with a crime in one area and fleeing to the other where they don't face charges. These existing security concerns are seen as likely to multiply given the unclear language laid out in the Agreement.

## PERCEPTIONS OF RECONSTRUCTION

### Prioritization of Reconstruction Concerns

The Agreement lays out the need for a representative committee to be formed between KRG and federal Iraq to coordinate reconstruction efforts, and to present the next steps to the KRG and Iraqi prime ministers. As with all other committees mentioned in the Agreement, the lack of community representation in this process is seen as delegitimizing, a fact of particular importance for this committee because reconstruction is seen as intrinsically connected to security and administration. The lack of access to services or job opportunities creates conditions that increase the likelihood of recruitment into armed groups

and thus increases instability in the area. Additionally, without community support of the reconstruction committee, women fear that decisions made will create an opening for demographic shifts by KRG and/or Iraq.

Returnee women also noted that reconstruction prioritization had the ability to increase opportunity for education for girls and women with the establishment of schools and workshops, strengthening women's capacity to claim their rights and play a direct role in the district's administration and security.

11. See for example 'We need help': suicides spike at Duhok's camps for Yazidis', January 18, 2021, accessible at: <https://www.rudaw.net/english/kurdistan/180120211>

## ROLE OF UNITED NATIONS AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

As women lack traditional access to power within government, and have a limited capacity to advocate for their needs directly for both structural and social reasons, a number of focus group and interview participants saw the international community as playing a unique role in advocating for women's needs and concerns. While IDP and returnee community members alike consistently noted a mistrust of the United Nations and the international community, they also saw them as the best representatives available to negotiate the community's needs to the Iraqi and Kurdistan Regional Governments. They also saw the potential of the United Nations to advocate foreign governments to apply international pressure on the KRG and Iraqi government, as well as the Turkish and Syrian governments, to secure autonomy and self-governance for Sinjar.

From the perspectives of women who participated in interviews and focus group discussions inside of Iraq and KRI, the United Nations had fallen short in their obligations to provide security and protection to the Yazidi community, but still offered a level of legitimacy, particularly as the perceived drivers of the Agreement, to advocate for the inclusion of the community perspective in the Agreement's implementation. Women in Sinjar noted that

they also saw a long-term role for UN Peacekeepers to serve as a neutral security presence in the area given the lack of trust in the Iraqi Army, Peshmerga, or armed groups currently in the area. Women in the diaspora saw the United Nations more positively, speaking highly of the efforts that have been done in the community to improve living conditions, and of the potential for advocacy and international pressure, capacity building, and accountability to ensure the Agreement's implementation.

Women also shared concerns about the role of international organizations more broadly. They noted the impact of short-term programming and poorly trained mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) staff in causing harm to the mental health of the community, and particularly to the safety and security of women. As noted above, this concern reflects the broader definition that women brought to security issues to include concerns over growing suicide rates for women in the Yazidi community. While this doesn't fit specifically into feedback on the implementation of the Sinjar Agreement itself, it is nonetheless a repeated concern that women expressed from both IDP and returnee communities with regards to their perceptions of safety and security in their communities.

## KEY CONCERNS OF VARIOUS COMMUNITIES

While there was significant overlap between the perspectives of women from returnee, IDP, and diaspora communities, there were some key differences between them.

### RETURNEE COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

Women who had returned to Sinjar were the least reluctant to share their perspectives and describe what they saw as major failings of the local governments and of the international community. Women from the returnee community were particularly concerned about the need for Yazidi representation in government offices. Additionally, as the group most directly impacted by the Agreement, they had the most in-depth understanding of the Agreement's points and the most specific recommendations for improving its implementation. This community was most concerned with having an international, unbiased accountability

process that examined not only the roles of ISIL members in the genocide, but also the roles of the KRG and federal Iraq. They also requested clear benchmarks, timelines, and community participation in the various committees established by the Agreement. They recommended the increased involvement of the community policing program in the security of Sinjar, and had a clear plan as to how the police should be identified and allocated based on ethnicity, religion, and community background to ensure that the police were an accurate reflection of the community itself.

### IDP COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

In contrast to the returnee community, the IDP community was much more critical of armed groups, although the vaguely referenced "parties" rather than naming the specific groups they saw as obstacles to long-term peace in the region. They were more directly critical of the federal Iraqi government and informal armed groups and largely stayed away from direct critique of the KRG, likely due in part to the fact that they continue to reside in the KRI. IDP respondents were primarily concerned with the need to make government offices, public services, and security and protection services more accessible to women. This access was in reference both to receipt of services for women that was welcoming, unintrusive, and free from discouragement, harassment, or abuse, as well as employment opportunities for

women, which would both help to stabilize women's financial and psychological well being and help to cultivate an environment in which women could seek and receive help. They were less directly concerned with the need for representation of Yazidis, as they did not see as many options available within traditional community structures to honestly reflect and represent their interests as women, and thus wanted direct access. The IDP community had a slightly less detailed understanding of the individual points of the Agreement as a whole, but still felt equipped to provide feedback on each component comfortably.

## DIASPORA COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

The diaspora sample size was considerably smaller than either the IDP or returnee communities, and so drawing strong conclusions on the commonalities within this community is more difficult. However, one of the reasons why the sample size was so small was due to the fact that some women reported not having a strong understanding of the Agreement and thus did not feel comfortable speaking on it. This, along with feedback from the three semi-structured interviewees, indicates that women in the diaspora have only a surface-level understanding of the points of the Agreement, and don't know the specifics laid out under each axis. This makes sense given the lack of day to day implications

this Agreement would have on women in the diaspora. However, in contrast to other communities, women from the diaspora were more inclusive in their perspectives on whose voices should be heard in the Agreement implementation. They spoke not only of Yazidis and women, but of vulnerable groups more broadly, including the need for mechanisms to bring in the ideas of youth, as well as of socially and economically vulnerable communities. Overall, they were the least openly critical of the Agreement or of existing power structures, but were also quick to note that it had been nearly a decade since they had last lived in Sinjar and their detailed knowledge of daily life was limited.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

From an administrative perspective, while IOM cannot be involved in the appointment of a new mayor, it should continue to work to advocate for greater community inclusion, and particularly the inclusion of women's and youth voices in the political process. This could involve continuing to find opportunities for capacity building within these communities around topics such as advocacy, but could also include leveraging existing governmental relationships that IOM and other international organizations have developed to create space for representatives of the community to provide feedback on the Agreement and its implementation over time. This may also mean working directly with government offices from both KRG and federal Iraq to increase their capacity in community involvement and participatory decision making.

IOM should consider strengthening the role of the community policing program in Sinjar to ensure that women have a safe outlet to express their security concerns. This may mean advocating that the community police conduct outreach to organizations, community groups, youth centers, and other institutions to introduce their services and explain the mechanisms through which citizens can access the services of the community policing program. Additionally, IOM could work with the local government to ensure that the community policing unit is included as a part of the scale up of local policing in Sinjar, and model the community diversity and representation that was requested.

IOM should strengthen its programming related to protection and women's role in peace and security, since these were top issues of concern for respondents. This may include strengthening MHPSS and CRSV support programming. However, it is critical to note that women had concerns about the quality of programming being offered in these fields, and so capacity building of organizations engaging in this work and long-term funding

that allows for multi-phase programming and sustained support would be needed to ensure that these protection concerns are being addressed in a meaningful and positive way.

In order to both model a process that the Agreement could replicate in its implementation, and in order to provide better guidance to the various organizations operating and doing rehabilitation and reconstruction work in Sinjar, IOM could establish a community committee of diverse voices to determine prioritization for rehabilitation and reconstruction activities to provide to organizations engaged in this work. This would allow communities who see vulnerable families to advocate for their situations to be improved before they turn to parties, armed groups, or others to meet their needs because they aren't able to do so directly.

Finally, IOM could serve as a partner to the local community by advocating for the inclusion of local voices in the Agreement's implementation, providing international pressure on the local governments to be responsive to the needs of the community as part of an international coalition. They could provide capacity building to community members to advocate for their needs directly, to local organizations to better raise the voices of the community and better meet the protection needs of women, and to the government to better understand and integrate community feedback in the Agreement's implementation through community committees or similar platforms. Finally, IOM could help the government to establish benchmarks and accountability mechanisms to ensure the Agreement's implementation.

## CONCLUSIONS

While this research set out to map the diversity of perspectives of women from displaced and returnee communities on the Sinjar Agreement, there was actually very little meaningful contrast in viewpoints expressed among women from IDP and returnee communities. While specific points in the Agreement were perceived by women as more or less practical, the document as a whole was viewed by all interview and focus group participants to be a political rather than practical document, and thus was not widely perceived as something to be taken seriously. As women in Sinjar tend to hold roles in community leadership that are distinct from politics, their perspectives focused less on the political repercussions of the Agreement and more on the day-to-day implications, which they saw to be minimal to non-existent.

Overall, women reported feeling very little confidence in power structures as they currently exist, whether from the Iraqi or KRI governments, the United Nations/international organizations, traditional family/tribal structures, or armed groups, to accurately reflect their needs or to bring tangible benefits to the administration, security, or reconstruction of their community. Women reported feeling that their communities and perspectives, both as women and as Yazidis, were overlooked and ignored in the Agreement process in favor of moving forward. They expressed concern and anger that their demands to take the time needed to seek accountability for the events leading up to August 2014, when Sinjar fell to ISIL and Yazidi women were subject to the community-wide trauma of sexual slavery, had been overlooked in the process of determining next steps for Sinjar.

The Sinjar Agreement is widely perceived by women in both IDP and returnee communities to be illegitimate, not because of the language it does include, but because women say it lacks the detail that would allow it to serve as a working roadmap for the district. Additionally, while women still report seeing a place for the United Nations in the implementation of the Agreement, the perceived role of the UN in getting the Agreement on the table between the two governments without a comprehensive community input process undermines an already conflicted perception of the UN by Yazidi women. Across any identified political alliances or affiliations, women reported being united in the perspective that they, their needs, and their perspectives have been neglected, and that the broader community outside of Sinjar is trying to move back to pre-2014 terms for Sinjar without addressing the conditions that led to the rise of ISIL in the first place, thus putting them at repeated risk.

In short, this reported distrust of existing power structures means that a truly community-rooted response to the administration, security, and reconstruction of Sinjar would mean deep, fundamental changes to the broader landscape of Iraq and KRI, as well as of the role of the international community. To fully respond to the demands of the community, this would mean bringing in international, neutral investigators to look at the role of the KRG and Iraqi governments in the fall of Sinjar to lay out a framework for transitional justice in partnership with the community, the establishment of Sinjar as a governorate to increase the self-determination of its people to elect leadership rather than have them be appointed, the presence of UN Peacekeepers as a precondition for the removal of armed groups and state military to establish security, a local representative police force to enforce day to day internal security, an increased presence of women and Yazidis in administration and governance, including the allowance of Yazidis to serve as judges, and deep investment into basic infrastructure in Sinjar to mitigate the conditions that lead to recruitment into armed groups.

Proximity to Sinjar played a direct role in how invested the women were in the specific points addressed in the Agreement and how strongly women felt disheartened in the Agreement and the future of a safe and inclusive Sinjar, with those currently living in the district feeling the most hopeless for the Agreement's implementation and future and having the strongest understanding of the particular points raised in the Agreement, and those in the diaspora most cautiously optimistic that the Agreement could bring about positive change in some form but with the least detailed information about the Agreement itself. However, even within those who were most positive about the role of KRG and federal Iraq in striking a stabilizing Agreement, it was clear that they did not have confidence in the governments alone to implement the Agreement and wanted clear, structural accountability mechanisms and guarantees to re-establish trust between the government and the people.

Given Sinjar's importance for federal Iraq and KRI, as well as internationally, it is worth asking whether community demands for broad, sweeping reforms would be feasible. However, it is clear that women view these steps as necessary to truly make Yazidi women feel seen and heard in the administration, security, and reconstruction of Sinjar.



## ANNEX 1: FOCUS GROUP GUIDE

Activity	Approximate time	Materials needed
Introduction of research: outline purpose of research, informed consent, introduction of researcher(s)/facilitator(s)	10 min	Informed consent outline for participants, flip chart outlining the purpose of the research
Ice breaker: develop rapport between members, ensure comfort of participants to engage in discussion and disagreement; facilitator will ask participants to find a partner and interview them to find out their name, role in civil society, and an interesting fact about them, which they will then share for their partner to the group	10 min	Paper/notebooks and pencils
Discussion of security needs in Sinjar (Section 1 of questionnaire)	20 min	Flipchart and markers
Discussion of administrative needs in Sinjar (section 2 of questionnaire)	20 min	Flipchart and markers
Discussion of security needs in Sinjar	20 min	Flipchart and markers
Review purpose of research and how feedback will be integrated, thank participants	10 min	none

### QUESTIONNAIRE:

#### Introduction:

Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_, I work for IOM as a researcher. We are completing an independent research project to understand the unique needs and concerns of Sinjari women (both in and out of Sinjar) regarding the security, administration, and governance of Sinjar. The goal of this research is to better understand how IOM can support, voice, and advocate for the needs of women in the ongoing peace Agreements being established between KRI and the Iraqi government.

Your participation in this focus group discussion is completely voluntary. At any point in the discussion you may choose to leave or not discuss any details that make you feel uncomfortable. In

order to facilitate the discussion, I will be taking notes, but we will not use any names or identifying information after the discussion. Any information you provide will be kept anonymous, and your identity will not be shared. Information you provide will be used only to understand the unique needs of women in your community and you will not receive anything for participating today.

The total time of the discussion should not last longer than one and a half hours.

Do you understand and consent to participate in this discussion?

Do you have any questions before we begin?

**Place of discussion:**

**FGD date:**

**Part 1: Security Issues:**

1. What are the main peace and security challenges that affect women in your community, and how do these impact daily life?
2. In what ways do you see yourself or your work contributing toward peace and security in your community?
3. What factors inhibit women's involvement in building peace and contributing to security? And what factors could promote and support women's active involvement in building peace, preventing violence, and contributing to positive social cohesion in your community?
4. What would a community living in peace and without security concerns look like to you?
5. Who are the security actors in your area? Who do you prefer to act on your behalf in security matters?

**Part 2: Administrative and governance issues:**

6. In what ways do women interact with government administration in their daily life?
7. What administrative and governance challenges do women face in their day to day lives? How do these challenges impact women in different ways than men?
8. How do women in your community resolve administrative and governance challenges and who do they turn to for support in these issues?
9. What would effective local administration look like to you?
10. What are the top needs for women in your community that you feel are the responsibility of the government to resolve?

11. What expectations do women in your community have of the government in responding to the needs of housing and physical infrastructure in Sinjar?
12. What expectations do women in your community have of the government in responding to emergency, security, and community services in Sinjar?
13. What expectations do women in your community have of the government in responding to civil society in Sinjar?
14. What expectations do women in your community have of the government in responding to community dynamics and conflict in Sinjar?
15. Do women in your community want the government to engage directly with women on issues related to governance? How should the government better listen to the voices of women? What are the current gaps in the government doing this? Are there any positive examples?

**Part 3: Sinjar Agreement**

16. Did you hear about the security Agreement between KRI and Baghdad made in October of last year? If yes, what did you hear?
17. Who did you hear about the Agreement from? Who do you trust to give you information and help you understand the Agreement and its impacts on your life (media, individuals, family members, friends, social media, etc)?
18. What, if any, positives do you see about the Agreement?
19. What, if any, negatives do you see about the Agreement?
20. What, if any, issues would you have liked to see discussed in the Agreement that wasn't?
21. Who do you understand was consulted in the process of arranging the Agreement? Do you feel these people are able to accurately represent your needs and perspectives?

## ANNEX 2: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

### INTRODUCTION:

Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_, I work for IOM as a researcher. We are completing an independent research project to understand the unique needs and concerns of Sinjari women (both in and out of Sinjar) regarding the security, administration, and governance of Sinjar. The goal of this research is to better understand how IOM can support, voice, and advocate for the needs of women in the ongoing peace Agreements being established between KRI and the Iraqi government.

Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary. At any point in the discussion you may choose to leave or not discuss any details that make you feel uncomfortable. In order to facilitate the discussion, I will be taking notes, but we will not use any names or identifying information after the discussion. Any information you provide will be kept anonymous, and your identity will not be shared. Information you provide will be used only to understand the unique needs of women in your community and you will not receive anything for participating today.

The total time of the discussion should not last longer than one and a half hours.

Do you understand and consent to participate in this discussion?

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Full Name of Interview Subject:

Role/affiliation in community:

Phone number (note: this is only to be used for any needed follow-up on interview responses):

Date and location of interview:

### Part 1: Security Issues:

1. What are the main peace and security issues that impact you in your everyday life?
2. How do you feel you contribute to peace and security in your community?
3. How do you feel the needs of men and women differ on security issues?
4. Do you feel like your needs or the needs of women in your community are adequately addressed?
5. Who do you trust to support you or women in your community when security issues occur? Why do you trust these people/institutions?

### Part 2: Administrative and governance issues:

6. What administrative or governance issues are of greatest priority to you in Sinjar?

7. Who do you turn to in your community to address administrative/governance concerns? Is there a pathway for you to have your concerns responded to, either formally or informally?
8. Do you feel you/women have equal access to local government to address administrative and governance concerns as men in your community?
9. What types of interactions do you have in your life or work with local government?
10. What are the top needs for women in your community that you feel are the responsibility of the government to resolve?
11. What expectations do women in your community have of the government in responding to the needs of housing and physical infrastructure in Sinjar?
12. What expectations do women in your community have of the government in responding to emergency, security, and community services in Sinjar?
13. What expectations do women in your community have of the government in responding to civil society in Sinjar?
14. What expectations do women in your community have of the government in responding to community dynamics and conflict in Sinjar?
15. Do women in your community want the government to engage directly with women on issues related to governance? How should the government better listen to the voices of women? What are the current gaps in the government doing this? Are there any positive examples?

### Part 3: Sinjar Agreement

16. What, if anything, have you heard about the Sinjar Agreement between the KRG and Baghdad made in October, 2020?
17. Do you feel like you have a strong understanding of what the Agreement will do in Sinjar? What do you understand it will do? What do you think the pros and cons of the Agreement will be in the community?
18. Who did you hear about the Sinjar Agreement from (news, social media, family, friends, etc.)?
19. Who do you trust to give you accurate information on the Agreement, and why do you feel like this source/these sources are more trustworthy than others?
20. How well informed do you feel like the community is in Sinjar about the Agreement? Who is most informed and who is least informed?

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