
WHAT THE US NEEDS TO DO TO PREVENT A NEW ISIS IN IRAQ

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Shelly Culbertson, senior policy researcher at the RAND Corporation, explains the steps that the US can take in leading the stabilization effort in Iraq to prevent the rise of a new ISIS. Following is a transcript of the video.

Shelly Culbertson: I'm Shelly Culbertson, I'm a senior policy researcher at the RAND Corporation and I study issues in the Middle East related to refugees, stabilization, and public sector development.

We've concluded that unless a series of urgent steps take place over the coming year to provide some of the prerequisites for Iraq to get back on a path to stability, violence could resume once again in a matter of months.

Given all of the American lives that we've lost, and the many, many Iraqi lives that have been lost, it's very much in US national interest to take a leading role in the stabilization of Mosul and other parts of Iraq as well as in the military victory.

The US has actually taken a very large role in the humanitarian effort. The US is the largest donor to humanitarian assistance and so its ongoing and sustained and additional support is really needed in order to prevent that to happen.

Mosul will require a number of steps in order to rebuild it and to set it back on a path to prosperity. I think many of the most important steps that are required will happen during the first year. Really providing a lot of the prerequisites so that it can rebuild and get on a path to growth again.

So one of those is figuring out how to deal with the displaced people that are from Mosul. So about

800 thousand people are still living displaced out of Mosul. So working on policies and plans to help them get back home. But for them to be able to come back home, they have to be able to go home and find intact homes, health, education, and so forth that are there.

One big obstacle to them going home is the level of explosive hazards that ISIS left. ISIS left mines, booby traps, etcetera really on an industrial scale. They did this as a tactic to keep civilians from coming back home. So they mined hospitals, pharmacies, schools, water lines, the level of baby cribs. A really big first step in order to make all of this happen is significant investment in demining. Not just in public utilities and services, but also in housing.

A next important step is making sure that the city is secure. In order to secure Mosul and prevent ISIS from moving right back in, the city requires about 60 thousand troops just to maintain the status quo. And unfortunately there's a risk that because of the ongoing fight against ISIS elsewhere that those troops could be drawn off.

Mosul also needs about 25 thousand trained police, and to date about 15 thousand have been hired and trained. And while the coalition is working on training other police, police who are important to keep the peace in the streets, prevent reprisals, prevent looting, that training isn't fast enough, so the situation is pretty urgent.

Mosul also requires investment in its public services. Rebuilding some of the water, electricity, sewage lines. That's under way. Schools are starting to open. But many of these things need a bit of a long-term plan. Both to build infrastructure, get the people back — the staff, the doctors, the nurses, the teachers — and to help do some of the indoctrination that happened during that time.

And finally, some bigger issues regarding governance and reconciliation will need to be addressed. Many communities in Ninawa Province, of which Mosul is the capital, just don't trust each other any more. There's a lot of trauma between the Sunnis, the Shiites, the Christians, the Yazidis, the Turkmen and so forth. And so there are some important steps that need to happen in terms of local reconciliation in addition to working with Baghdad on a broader national plan for reconciliation, particularly in a roadmap among the Sunnis, the Shiites, the Kurds, and others.