
UN CALLS FOR PREVENTING ISIS FROM REGAINING FOOTHOLD IN IRAQ

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Asharq Al-Awsat

Baghdad - Hamza Mustafa

The UN chiefs Special Representative for Iraq has stressed the importance of adopting a long-term approach to prevent ISIS terrorist group from regaining a foothold in Iraq.

Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, who heads the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), told the UN Security Council that if the issue of returning ISIS militants from Syria to Iraq, along with their families, is not resolved, then we risk creating a new breeding ground for the next generation of terrorists.

All this, is not just an Iraqi problem. We know that certain states prefer to maintain a strategic distance with regard to their own nationals, she said.

On an entirely separate and encouraging note: Baghdad is opening up. Very soon the Green Zone will no longer exist, Hennis-Plasschaert said.

However, she warned that the security situation will continue to require close monitoring. Not only in Baghdad, but throughout the country.

Hennis-Plasschaert told Council members that a Coalition representative has recently said that ISIS is re-surfing. They rested, moved and are active.

Another dominant security concern is the issue of armed actors operating outside state control, engaged in illegal or criminal activities and exerting economic and social influence throughout the country. Clearly, the activities of these actors undermine state authority, they affect vulnerable communities, they weaken the national economy and sadly, they also prevent the peaceful return of displaced persons, she said.

Baghdad declared final victory over ISIS end of 2017 after Iraqi forces drove the groups last remnants from the country, three years after the extremist organization captured about a third of Iraqs territory. Yet ISIS militants continued to carry out a scatter-gun campaign of kidnap and killing across the country.

Security expert Fadel Abou Raghif denied that ISIS is making a comeback.

ISIS is already here through cells ... It is also present among the displaced, he told Asharq Al-Awsat.

Most of the sleeper cells are not wanted by the authorities. Thats why they are not put under

surveillance, he said.

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