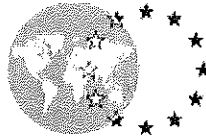


EUROPEAN EXTERNAL ACTION SERVICE



GLOBAL & MULTILATERAL ISSUES

The Managing Director

Brussels, 10 July 2015
eeas.vi.a.1(2015)3151887**MRS VIVIANE TEITELBAUM**
PRESIDENT
EUROPEAN WOMEN'S LOBBY
18, RUE HYDRAULIQUE
1210 BRUSSELS

Dear Mrs Teitelbaum,

Thank you for your letter of 25 March 2015 regarding the EWL request for EU action following the Islamic State violation of women's human rights. I fully share your horror at the terrible crimes that are being perpetrated by Da'esh against the Syrian and Iraqi population, and in particular against women.

In March the EU Foreign Ministers adopted an 'EU regional strategy for Syria and Iraq and ISIL/Da'esh threat' outlining how the EU are planning to counter the threat posed by ISIL/Da'esh and help restore peace and security in Syria and Iraq. The EU aims at a comprehensive effort addressing the underlying dynamics of the conflicts as well as its consequences, through diplomacy and support for political reforms, humanitarian aid, reconciliation between different ethnic groups, stabilisation, economic development and long term reconstruction and reconciliation. An inclusive political transition in Syria and inclusive political governance in Iraq are crucial to sustainable peace and stability in the region.

The role of women and their full and effective participation in conflict resolution are also specifically addressed in the strategy, in line with UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and related resolutions. The strategy pays special attention to the violence and insecurity faced by women and girls in the area, and calls for an immediate end to all sexual and gender-based violence. Sustainable political solutions as a basis for effective strategies against terrorism and violent extremism cannot be pursued without women's active participation in these efforts, which is why projects financed by the EU in the affected region include activities specifically targeting the empowerment of women and their inclusion in political processes, while other EU financed programmes and projects are required to fully mainstream gender as a cross-cutting issue in their implementation.

A EUR 1 billion package has been mobilized to ensure the effectiveness of this EU response. Women empowerment is and will remain an integral dimension of our action. For example, in the framework of a new EU Regional Trust Fund in response to the Syria

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crisis (the Madad Fund) launched in December 2014, EUR 10 million of the fund's initial funding (EUR 40 million, contributions from the EU budget and Italy) have already been committed for a programme focusing on women which aims at strengthening their prospects to be economically and socially productive and to reduce tensions within the host populations.

As you are aware, the EU continues to support the documentation of crimes in Syria, including such violence. The EU supported the renewal of the mandate of the UN Commission of Inquiry and reported on a number of occasions its call to the UN Security Council to refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court.

In addition on 2 June, the EEAS Deputy Secretary General Helga Schmid, in follow up of a previous meeting with female Syrian MPs, and the EEAS Human Rights Director Silvio Gonzato, met with Kvinna till Kvinna and five prominent Syrian female Human Rights activists leading CSOs operating in Syria. The main focus of the frank and open exchange was centred on how the EU could best support the work of local CSOs in Syria and how to improve the situation of women in the country at large, as well as to ensure the meaningful participation of women in ongoing peace talks. All women agreed that pursuing a non-military political track was the only way to finding a sustainable solution to the ongoing conflict and that women needed to be an integral part of mutually inclusive peace talks. To support the establishment of a civil society consultative body within the Geneva communicate framework which would ensure a meaningful inclusion of both CSO and women representatives (30% of all delegations) was one important key recommendation from the group. We will follow up on those issues in close coordination with the UN Special Envoy for Syria, Mr de Mistura.

In Iraq as well, reports of gross, widespread and systematic human rights violations, especially against Yezidi women, are a matter of grave concern. The EU has responded with a package of measures which will also directly benefit Iraqi girls and women. In addition to the EUR 63 million in humanitarian aid which the EU has mobilised for Iraq so far this year, the EU is in the process of preparing a EUR 9 million stabilisation package. An educational support programme of EUR 30 million for Iraqi children, including a major emergency response component for IDPs, is also in the pipeline, as are further measures in support of human rights, good governance and rule of law, which aim at benefiting women too.

HRVP Federica Mogherini remains fully dedicated to the EU strong leadership in the implementation of the UNSCR 1325 and its follow up resolutions, especially in light with the ongoing Global review of the Women, Peace and Security agenda. This year's Annual EU Member States meeting on UNSCR 1325, that took place in Brussels on 26 June, focused on Women, Peace and Security in the context of violent extremism and terrorism. She is also committed, in the context of the EEAS review, to appointing a Senior Gender Adviser in order to increase visibility on the gender and UNSCR 1325 related issues.

Yours sincerely,



Mara Marinaki