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**Letter dated 24 November 2021 from the Special Adviser and Head of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant addressed to the President of the Security Council**

I have the honour to transmit herewith, in accordance with paragraph 3 of Security Council resolution [2597 \(2021\)](#), the seventh report on the activities of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant.

I would be grateful if the present letter and the report were brought to the attention of the members of the Security Council and issued as a document of the Council.

*(Signed)* Christian **Ritscher**  
Special Adviser and Head of the Investigative Team



## **Seventh report of the Special Adviser and Head of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant**

### *Summary*

The seventh report on the activities of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution [2597 \(2021\)](#).

During the reporting period, the Team accelerated its investigative activities and re-established full field-based operational capacity. By harnessing its enhanced evidence-collection and analytical capacity, the Team has moved closer to the establishment of a comprehensive evidence-base capable of supporting the prosecution of senior Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, also known as Da'esh) members responsible for international crimes committed against the communities of Iraq.

In November, a further milestone was reached in the core investigative work of the Team, with a third case brief completed in relation to its investigation into the mass killing of predominantly Shia prisoners at Badush prison on 10 June 2014. Synthesizing witness accounts, forensic evidence from mass grave excavations, satellite imagery, documentary material collected from Iraqi counterparts and internal ISIL digital records extracted from battlefield evidence, the Team has established a strong legal basis for the prosecution of perpetrators in national jurisdictions. Moving forward, this investigation will seek to expand its scope in order to capture a broader picture of ISIL criminal activity in the lead-up to its occupation of Mosul in 2014.

Investigations by the Team into the use of chemical and biological weapons by ISIL in Iraq have also moved forward rapidly. Based on testimonial, digital, documentary and forensic evidence, the Team has identified approximately 3,000 potential victims and witnesses of chemical weapons attacks carried out by ISIL. Analysis of previously unaccessed internal ISIL documentation on its chemical weapons programme shows the strategic planning undertaken in anticipation of the development of such weapons, including the use of Mosul University as a centre for research and development.

The work of the dedicated Financial Crimes Unit of the Team has benefited from close collaboration with Iraqi authorities. Focusing its investigative activities on Bayt al-Mal, the central ISIL treasury, the Team has uncovered evidence detailing the internal administrative functioning of this department and how its actions directly supported the ability of ISIL to carry out international crimes. This work has further revealed that a network of senior ISIL leadership acted as trusted financiers, diverting wealth generated through acts of pillage, theft and the broader persecution of religious minorities across Iraq. In line with its terms of reference, the Team has shared these findings with Iraqi authorities, setting a basis for joint case-building and potential prosecutions in Iraq.

A major evidence-digitization project led by the Team has entered a new phase of operational output. Within the reporting period, over 2,000,000 pages of documentary evidence from Iraqi courts have been archived and digitized in line with international standards, with priority documentation incorporated into the evidence holdings of the Team. The Team is currently supporting the digitization of over 25,000 documents a day, all of which had previously only been available in paper copy and often stored in insecure conditions.

The work of the Team remains founded on its excellent cooperation with the Government of Iraq, and in particular with the committee designated by the Government to coordinate with the Team. Consistent with that spirit of collaboration, the Team has redoubled its efforts to provide meaningful support to Iraqi authorities in their efforts to strengthen national investigations into ISIL crimes. Emphasis has been placed on delivering a holistic and complementary range of assistance to Iraqi counterparts, with the ultimate objective of finalizing comprehensive case briefs with Iraqi authorities capable of supporting the prosecutions of key ISIL members in Iraq responsible for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.

Along with the evidence-digitization measures outlined above, this comprehensive approach involves the provision of extensive training in the collection and presentation of digital evidence and in the collection of forensic evidence from mass grave sites, and the recent successful completion of an advanced training programme for Iraqi investigative judges in international criminal law.

Following the reduction of restrictions relating to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in Iraq, the Team has moved to rapidly restart mass grave excavation activities in cooperation with Iraqi authorities, and in line with the joint mass grave investigations strategy adopted in 2020. Excavations near to Badush prison recommenced in November 2021 and are anticipated to be completed by the end of 2021, while an additional return of remains ceremony in relation to victims of the mass killings carried out at Kuju village will take place in December.

Through close cooperation with Iraqi authorities, the Team has also deepened its support for domestic proceedings globally. This has included facilitation of the arrest of individuals believed to be active ISIL members. The exploitation of ISIL internal documentation collected by the Team, providing an insight into the individual activities of its members, has been key in supporting the investigative and prosecutorial work of domestic authorities.

Reflecting the increased momentum in its work, the Team looks forward in the next reporting period to the anticipated first prosecutions of ISIL members for international crimes, drawing on evidence collected pursuant to Security Council resolution [2379 \(2017\)](#).

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## I. Introduction

1. The seventh report on the activities of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (UNITAD) is hereby submitted to the Security Council.
2. During the reporting period, the Team continued its investigations pursuant to its mandate to support national efforts to hold Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, also known as Da'esh) accountable for acts that may amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. The work of the Team has been conducted in accordance with Security Council resolution [2379 \(2017\)](#) and the terms of reference for the activities of the Team in Iraq ([S/2018/118](#), annex), as approved by the Council on 13 February 2018. In line with paragraph 3 of resolution [2379 \(2017\)](#), the Special Adviser and Head of the Team has also continued to engage closely with survivor groups, national authorities, religious actors and non-governmental organizations in order to promote, throughout the world, accountability for crimes committed by ISIL and to work with survivors to ensure that their interests in achieving accountability for ISIL are fully recognized.
3. On 7 September 2021, the Secretary-General announced the appointment of Christian Ritscher as the new Special Adviser and Head of the Investigative Team, effective 1 October 2021. In his initial weeks in post, the Special Adviser has prioritized engagement with key partners in Iraq, including high-level government officials, survivor groups, religious authorities and non-governmental organizations. On 17 September 2021, in its resolution [2597 \(2021\)](#), the Security Council, at the request of the Government of Iraq, decided unanimously to extend the mandate of the Investigative Team.
4. The reporting period was marked by the continued need for the adoption of innovative and flexible approaches in order to address the multifaceted challenges posed by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), security risks associated with some areas of investigation, and broader political and social factors, including the elections held in Iraq in October.
5. The present report outlines progress achieved within this challenging context. Investigative work has accelerated significantly. During periods of limitations on field-based activity, investigators focused their efforts on harnessing the new technological tools that have been introduced to support the analysis of evidence. The use of artificial intelligence, machine learning and industry-leading e-discovery tools has enhanced the ability of the Team to corroborate testimonial and forensic material with internal ISIL documentation obtained from digital battlefield evidence. Through the synthesis of this information, the Team has reached additional findings with respect to the legal characterization of crimes committed by ISIL in Iraq.
6. Building on this momentum, the Team looks forward positively to the coming reporting period, with the ultimate objective of setting a comprehensive evidence base that will allow for the conduct of international-standard trials in Iraq, fully reflecting the nature of the crimes inflicted by ISIL against its communities.
7. The Team is grateful for the steadfast support, throughout the reporting period, of the Government of Iraq, the Iraqi judiciary and the authorities of the Kurdistan Regional Government in the implementation of its mandate.

## II. Status of investigations

### A. Progress in investigative priorities

8. During the reporting period, the Team reached a series of additional landmarks in its lines of inquiry into crimes committed by ISIL, further strengthening an evidence base that is now being leveraged in support of national investigations and prosecutions. Drawing on six dedicated field investigation units based in Baghdad, Dahuk and Erbil, the Team continues to maintain its capacity to undertake investigations in relation to crimes committed against all communities affected by ISIL crimes in Iraq.

9. An additional case brief was completed during the reporting period, addressing crimes committed by ISIL in and around Badush prison near Mosul in June 2014. Providing a detailed analysis of the legal characterization of applicable crimes in these areas of investigation, the case brief seeks to provide a robust structural basis upon which national authorities can build successful prosecutions of ISIL members for international crimes. This progress builds on the finalization of two case briefs during the previous reporting period, addressing crimes committed against the Yazidi community in Sinjar beginning in August 2014, and the mass killing of unarmed cadets near Tikrit in June 2014.

10. Initial case briefs in relation to the crimes committed against the Christian community in Iraq and the development and use of chemical and biological weapons by ISIL are now anticipated for completion by the end of the second quarter of 2022.

#### **Mass executions at Badush prison, Mosul**

11. Substantial progress has been made in the investigation into crimes committed by ISIL against men who were imprisoned at Badush prison on 10 June 2014, allowing the Team to reach conclusions regarding the legal characterization of crimes committed in these attacks.

12. Evidence collected by the Team has confirmed that on the morning of 10 June, ISIL forces attacked Badush central prison near Mosul, which housed approximately 3,000 prisoners. Following the takeover of the prison, ISIL grouped prisoners, separated them based on religion and subsequently executed several hundred prisoners, predominantly Shia, at multiple locations. Analysis of the testimonial, digital and documentary evidence collected strongly suggests that the killing of at least 600 individuals in these attacks was motivated by broader ISIL doctrine and animus against the Shia community.

13. Through the collection and analysis of documentary evidence provided by Iraqi authorities, the Team has identified individual ISIL members responsible for the assault on the prison as well as information pertaining to the preparation and implementation of the mass killings. In-depth searches of its digital evidence holdings has allowed the Team to identify internal ISIL documents and rosters containing further information on the identity of these individuals.

14. Statements from direct survivors of the attacks have corroborated the forensic findings of the Team from crime scene analysis and mass grave excavation work conducted on-site in Badush Valley. Further mass execution sites have been identified through accounts of survivors and forensic findings from initial excavation activities, as outlined in more detail in section III. B.

### **Development and use of chemical and biological weapons by ISIL**

15. Investigations into the development and use of chemical and biological weapons by ISIL have continued to accelerate during the reporting period, focusing on two key lines of inquiry: (a) the attack against Tazah Khurmatu in March 2016, and (b) the takeover by ISIL of the University of Mosul in June 2014 and its subsequent repurposing in support of a weapons development programme.

16. The Team has identified approximately 3,000 potential victims and witnesses of chemical weapons attacks carried out by ISIL, including a significant proportion of adult females, boys and girls.

17. Investigations in relation to attacks in Tazah Khurmatu have confirmed that on 8 March 2016, the district was struck by numerous rocket artillery projectiles containing a sulfur mustard agent, resulting in serious injuries and loss of life, the destruction of property and long-term repercussions for human health and the environment. Key pieces of documentary, testimonial and digital evidence analysed include laboratory results from samples obtained during clean-up operations of contaminated sites, forensic data associated with recovered weapon remnants, medical records and medical admissions data, autopsy reports in specific cases involving child victims, and analysis of the specific characteristics of the chemical payload.

18. The analysis of internal ISIL documents has supported the identification of key ISIL organizational structures as well as specific ISIL members having knowledge of, and a potential leadership role in, the attacks on Tazah Khurmatu, along with others performing more facilitative or operational roles. A significant number of additional witnesses have also been identified, including first responders and medical professionals, survivors of the attack and other affected families.

19. Data associated with attendance at medical facilities for treatment following the attack have provided a preliminary indication that over 25 per cent of in-person presentations in the days following the attack were of infants and children experiencing symptoms ranging from first- and second-degree burns, to eye injuries, skin infections and respiratory issues. Longer term health implications for exposed residents appear to include underreported gender-related harms, including miscarriages, preterm complications and stillbirths, and congenital conditions.

20. With respect to the takeover of Mosul University by ISIL, investigations have confirmed that specific laboratories and workshops within the biology and chemistry buildings of the University College of Sciences were utilized to facilitate the systematic research, development and production of mustard and other weaponized substances.

21. Internal ISIL documents obtained by the Team have confirmed the modification of university curricula and the employment by ISIL of small teams of qualified technical and scientific experts, notably in the fields of chemistry and physics, to pursue the weaponization of specific chemical and biological substances on the university campus. Chemical stores at the University, including a specific chemical depository in the College of Medicine, appear to have been accessed by ISIL subsequent to 10 June 2014. These initial findings will inform priority areas of forthcoming inquiry, including the analysis of identities of and relationships between those contributing to the overall programme, their specific research focus, and the degree of progress made in each case.

22. These two lines of inquiry have drawn on the full range of investigative and analytical capacities available to the Team, including field collection operations, the

collation and review of digital and documentary evidential holdings, and the interviewing of direct survivors of chemical weapon attacks undertaken by ISIL.

#### **Crimes committed in the area of Tikrit**

23. The Team has continued to collect evidence with a view to further enhancing its case brief with respect to the mass killing of unarmed cadets and military personnel of Tikrit Air Academy in June 2014. Testimonial, documentary and digital evidence obtained in the reporting period has strengthened findings with respect to war crimes committed by ISIL in the context of these attacks, as well as the finding of incitement to commit genocide against the Shia community in Iraq.

24. In parallel, the Team has expanded this investigation to include other crimes committed by ISIL in the Tikrit area. Initial investigative actions have identified a number of potential incidents involving ISIL members who had already been identified as persons of interest in the mass killing in June 2014. These include reports of arbitrary detention, torture, murder, the unlawful targeting of civilians and civilian objects, and the destruction of places of worship and religious objects committed against the civilian population of Tikrit, Alam, Dulu'iyah and neighbouring areas.

25. Evidence collected to date in this broader line of investigation indicates that at around the same time as the mass killing of cadets and military personnel of Tikrit Air Academy, some of the ISIL leaders from the Tikrit area who may have played a role in the mass killings started targeting civilians who had helped some of the cadets to escape. The Team has identified a number of survivors and witnesses whose testimonial evidence is expected to play a central role in this new investigation phase. Through these accounts, the Team will seek to deepen its understanding of patterns in the conduct of known perpetrators.

#### **Crimes committed against the Christian community of Iraq**

26. During the reporting period, the Team prioritized its investigative efforts on the destruction of Christian cultural and religious heritage, namely, attacks on protected objects in Hamdaniyah, Karamlays and Bartalah. The team also continued to collect evidence related to the "Mosul ultimatum" and its impact on the Christian community being forcibly displaced by ISIL from their homes and businesses.

27. In parallel, investigations into the commission of sexual violence against, and the enslavement of members of, the Christian community by ISIL remained a key line of inquiry. Continued outreach efforts and cooperation with local religious leaders have been essential in empowering survivors to share their witness accounts with investigators. As part of this engagement, on 23 November the Special Adviser visited Hamdaniyah and Al-Tahira Church, meeting with a number of key church and community leaders who had played a significant role in documenting the destruction of both cultural heritage sites and private property of Christians by ISIL.

28. The Team has continued to exploit internal ISIL records and seized documentary holdings in preparation for the development of the initial case file and identification of priority persons of interest. Looking forward, the Team plans to concentrate on face-to-face interviews and field missions. The establishment of a field office in Erbil has enhanced outreach opportunities with local partners in this line of investigation, strengthening platforms for collaboration and the collection of information, the identification of survivors and the development of additional lines of inquiry.



**Crimes committed against the Sunni community**

29. Investigations into crimes committed against the Sunni community continued to expand, focusing on crimes committed against members of the Abu Nimr tribe, which was particularly targeted by ISIL because of its fierce opposition to the group.

30. Investigations have focused on the execution of hundreds of members of the Abu Nimr tribe in separate events between 2014 and 2016 in the area between Hit, Ramadi and Lake Tharthar in Anbar Governorate. Through the analysis of images and videos in relation to these events, using advanced analytical tools operationalized during the reporting period, the Team has identified additional victims, witnesses and perpetrators. Such evidence has been particularly helpful with respect to investigations into the execution of 48 members of the Abu Nimr in the central square of Hit on 29 October 2014.

31. As reflected in section III, in September 2021 the Team supported the excavation of the mass grave of Bi'r Haliwat, north of Ramadi, where 15 members of the Abu Nimr tribe were executed on 20 October 2014. Through the identifications of individual victims and the collecting of forensic evidence relevant to the method and circumstances surrounding these executions, the Team seeks to corroborate testimonial accounts already received from survivors and the families of victims.

32. Through cooperation with Iraqi judicial authorities, the Team has also collected key documentary evidence, including biographical data of ISIL members from Anbar. These documents, together with witness testimony and relevant battlefield evidence identified within the holdings of the Team, have contributed to the identification of additional crimes committed by ISIL against the Sunni community in Anbar Governorate, supporting the development of a detailed chronology of events spanning key incidents that have been identified as acts potentially constituting war crimes and crimes against humanity.

33. The Team has also strengthened cooperation with tribal leaders and civil society as part of its investigations into crimes committed against the Sunni community. In this regard, a town hall was held in Anbar in November 2021, co-hosted by the Governor and attended by local authorities and representatives of affected communities. This forum allowed the Team to explain its work to members of the Sunni community and other relevant entities in Anbar Governorate, opening up new opportunities for cooperation in support of investigative activities of the Team.

34. As part of investigations by the Team undertaken in Sinjar, focused primarily on crimes committed against the Yazidi community, evidence has also been collected demonstrating the targeted killing of Sunnis in and around the region. The Team has established that a significant number of these individuals were subjected to public execution. The executions were recorded and the footage was widely distributed by ISIL.

**Crimes committed against the Yazidi community in Sinjar**

35. During the reporting period, the Team collected significant additional evidence, which has been used to enhance the case brief with respect to attacks committed by ISIL against the Yazidi community in Sinjar. This has strengthened the initial findings of the Team that these attacks constituted war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. In parallel, the Team has diversified its lines of inquiry to include investigations into crimes committed against the Yazidi population of Hardan.

36. With respect to its investigations into crimes committed in Sinjar, the number of perpetrators identified by the Team increased to 1,743, including 102 foreign fighters. In-depth case files have been developed in relation to 28 primary persons of

interest. The expansion and deepening of evidence in relation to those responsible has been achieved through field missions throughout the region to collect physical and forensic evidence, the collection of further testimonial evidence from survivors, and the exploitation of battlefield evidence within the evidence holdings of the Team, including internal ISIL rosters.

37. Through the geographic expansion of these investigations, the Team has collected testimonial, documentary and digital evidence that has established the nature and scale of crimes committed against the Yazidi population of Hardan. This work has included the identification of key ISIL members responsible for the killings carried out at Hardan junction on 3 August 2014. An estimated 70 men were shot and their wives and children taken into captivity. The Team has also identified key ISIL members responsible for the enslavement of members of the Yazidi population of the area.

38. With a view to securing forensic evidence to corroborate the evidentiary material already collected in this line of inquiry, the Team has provided in-depth support to Iraqi authorities in preparation for the excavation of three mass graves around Hardan junction. Two additional sites are currently being assessed for potential excavation. Excavation work is anticipated to commence in the first quarter of 2022.

39. The DNA identification of the victims of the Kuju and Sulaqah massacres has continued, with the human remains of an additional 42 individuals to be returned to families in December as part of a ceremony supported by the Team, to be conducted in accordance with Yazidi custom.

40. Investigations into crimes committed against the Yazidi population of Khanah Sur and Sinuni have continued, with two mass graves near Khanah Sur identified. The evidence collected has confirmed that significant proportions of the Yazidi populations from Sinuni, Khanah Sur and Hardan were captured and taken to the Syrian Arab Republic before being returned to Iraq. Following their capture, men were forced to convert and children were trained in the use of weapons. While the wives of those men forced to convert were initially spared the fate of sexual enslavement, from May 2015 onwards, and following the execution of their husbands, they too were subjected to sexual slavery.

#### **Crimes committed against Kaka'i, Shabak and Shia Turkmen communities**

41. The Team has expanded the range of investigative leads and incidents relevant to its investigations into crimes committed against Kaka'i, Shabak and Shia Turkmen communities. This has included engaging with victims and other witnesses, who have securely reported incidents and provided evidence through the Shuhud online crime reporting tool, along with deepening the valuable cooperation with local civil society groups.

42. Investigations remain focused on targeted killings and the inhumane treatment of civilians, mass abductions, the systematic destruction of private homes and other properties, pillaging and the forcible displacement of communities. The Team has also continued investigations into the destruction of buildings dedicated to religion, education and art, historic monuments and other heritage sites of significance and is seeking additional relevant satellite imagery for this purpose. The Team has also continued to collect further witness accounts and forensically capture photos and video evidence. Based on new information collected by the Team during the reporting period, it has been able to expand its investigation into crimes committed against the Kaka'i in Kirkuk and Ninawa.

43. The Team is grateful for the financial contributions of the United States of America in support of its work with respect to crimes committed by ISIL against the Christian, Sunni, Kaka'i, Shabak and Shia Turkmen communities.

## **B. Specialized thematic units: mainstreaming expertise on key aspects of investigations**

44. In parallel with the core investigative work of its field investigation units, the Team has continued to build its capacity in specialized cross-sectional areas, ensuring that investigative activities are conducted in line with international standards.

### **Sexual and gender-based crimes and crimes against children**

45. The Team has significantly advanced its investigations into crimes against children through the work of its dedicated Gender Crimes and Children Unit. This has included the analysis of a broad range of ISIL documentation relevant to their policy of child recruitment, training and enforced fighting. This line of inquiry has also been advanced through interviewing a number of survivors of ISIL child recruitment policies, including Yazidi and Shia Turkmen boys who were conscripted by ISIL in 2014 and 2015. Going forward, the Team will expand the focus of this investigation into how children from other communities were affected by ISIL's policy of child recruitment.

46. Interviews with survivors have been particularly relevant in obtaining corroborating evidence of the ISIL strategy behind its slave trade, and the multitude of acts underlying the enslavement of captives. By expanding the geographical scope of its investigations in relation to the Yazidi community, the Team has also gathered additional evidence and deepened its understanding of the extent of gender-based crimes, including sexual slavery, rape and persecution. This work continues to be supported through the expertise of in-house psychologists of the Witness Protection and Support Unit who provide assistance to witnesses and survivors throughout the interview process so as to ensure they can provide their accounts in a manner that addresses the risk of further traumatization.

47. The Gender Crimes and Children Unit has also continued to actively support gender-competent and age-disaggregated aspects to investigations being undertaken by the Team into crimes committed against the Yazidi community. This has included specialized support with respect to the conduct of interviews with survivors of sexual violence connected to attacks conducted by ISIL on villages north of Sinjar mountain.

48. Building on preliminary work conducted in the first half of the year, the Team has continued its investigation into crimes committed by ISIL against the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer community. Conducting this work in a manner that addresses the social sensitivities of the topic and the security concerns faced by members of the community, the Team has recently conducted its first witness interviews in support of this investigation. The cooperation of activists and civil society organizations has been invaluable in progressing this investigation.

49. The Team is grateful for the financial contributions provided by Denmark and the United Arab Emirates in support of this area of its work.

### **Financing of ISIL crimes**

50. Through the work of its dedicated Financial Crimes Unit, the Team has strengthened its understanding of the economic dimensions of ISIL crimes, supporting the development of a deeper insight into ISIL structures and the financial incentives driving its core mechanisms.

51. During the reporting period, this line of investigation has focused on Bayt al-Mal (“house of money”) – the central ISIL treasury and the core department responsible for the collection, storage, management and movement of its wealth. Through this work, the Team has uncovered evidence detailing the internal administrative functioning of Bayt al-Mal and how the actions of this department directly supported the ability of ISIL to carry out international crimes.

52. This line of inquiry has further revealed that a network of senior ISIL leadership also acted as trusted financiers, diverting wealth generated through acts of pillage, targeting a range of communities across Iraq through the theft and confiscation of property, and aiding and abetting the commission of the crime against humanity of persecution. In particular, this investigation has revealed the broad and systematic nature of taxation imposed on individuals living under ISIL control through the organization’s imposition of zakat and jizyah, as well as demonstrating the role of the Diwan al-Hisbah in seizing money, gold, silver, jewellery, cash, vehicles and property from private entities and individuals and transferring them to Bayt al-Mal.

53. These investigative activities have built upon the preliminary line of inquiry taken forward by the Financial Crimes Unit in relation to the use by ISIL of money service businesses as key facilitators of their financing. Through the initial case brief completed in relation to this investigation, the Team has identified specific business owners and operators who committed a range of financial crimes and who aided and abetted ISIL in the commission of a range of core international crimes from 2014 onwards. In line with its terms of reference, the Team has shared these findings with Iraqi authorities, setting a basis for joint case-building and potential prosecutions in Iraq.

54. The Team has also widened the scope of its financial investigations to encompass key ISIL revenue streams including the illicit trade of oil and antiquities, the takeover of local agricultural sectors, various instances of pillaging and persecution (notably through theft and the confiscation of personal items), and revenue raised through enslavement. Moving forward, the Team will prioritize the conduct of interviews with a number of identified individuals who have direct insights into ISIL financial activities, as well as its expropriation of private property through pillaging.

55. The Team is grateful for the financial support provided by Germany to this area of work, which was recently renewed until the end of 2022.

### **C. Composition and facilities of the Investigative Team**

56. The Investigative Team now benefits from a total of 240 personnel, including 152 staff members.

57. Ensuring gender and geographical balance has remained a priority, with women presently accounting for 55 per cent of substantive and support staff, including gender balance in senior management positions in the Team. All regional groupings of the United Nations continue to be represented in the Team.

58. The Team is deeply committed to promoting gender parity across all parts of its structure. To this end, a gender parity working group has been established by the Team with the goal of identifying key bottlenecks to the recruitment of women, particularly to units within the team where parity has not yet been achieved.

59. In consultation with the Government of Iraq, the number of national experts appointed to the Team has further increased. Through the use of extrabudgetary funding and the filling of remaining positions, it is anticipated that 5 additional national experts will shortly be appointed, taking the total number of Iraqi national experts serving with the Team to 17.

60. During the reporting period, the Team has made significant progress in transitioning back to a full staffing footprint in Iraq, as well as a return to the usual in-person working modalities. This has been supported through measures including providing staff with access to COVID-19 vaccines in Iraq, in close collaboration with the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and the Government of Iraq.

#### **Provision of expert personnel by Member States**

61. The Team continues to welcome the support of Member States through the provision of expert personnel in accordance with paragraph 14 of resolution [2379 \(2017\)](#). During the reporting period, the Team was pleased to welcome new contributions of personnel from Egypt. These contributions build on the total of nine experts presently being provided by the national authorities of Australia, Finland, Germany, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Sweden.

62. The Team continues to welcome the nomination of national experts by Member States for secondment in support of its work. A call for nominations was circulated earlier this year, launching a new campaign for the recruitment of expert personnel to a range of roles viewed as particularly critical in supporting the exploitation of the significant amounts of battlefield evidence incorporated into its evidence holdings.

### **III. Investigative activities: collection and storage of evidentiary material**

63. The second half of 2021 has been marked by an acceleration of field-based activities as the Team retakes a normal staffing footing in Iraq. In conducting evidence collection activities on the ground, the Team remains grateful for the support of Iraqi national authorities, non-governmental organizations and local community partners. Through these partnerships, and by continuing to leverage advanced technological tools, the Team has been able to significantly expand its evidence holdings.

#### **A. Documentary, testimonial and digital evidence collection**

64. The collection of documentary evidence by the Team has expanded significantly, in line with the accelerated implementation of a major evidence digitization project being taken forward together with Iraqi authorities and those of the Kurdistan Regional Government.

65. Within the reporting period, a total of over 2,000,000 pages of documentary evidence from Iraqi courts have been archived and digitized in line with international standards, with priority documentation then incorporated into the evidence holdings of the Team. This has included the digitization and subsequent transfer of over 1,800 priority case files from Ninawa and Baghdad counter-terrorism courts to the Investigative Team, representing a total of more than 63,000 scanned pages. At present, the Team is supporting the digitization of more than 25,000 documents a day, all of which had previously only been available in paper copy and often stored in insecure conditions.

66. It is anticipated that by March 2022, the Team will have supported the digitization of more than 11,000,000 pages of documentary evidence relevant to the mandate of the Team, spanning 28 different national or regional authorities that have been engaged in the project. This work will also encompass the digital extraction of hundreds of seized ISIL mobile phones and hard drives. Further details on the support provided to Iraqi authorities under this project can be found in section IV. The Team

is grateful for the financial contribution of the European Union in support of this project.

67. In parallel, the Investigative Team has continued to acquire evidence from digital devices recovered from the battlefield, based on strong cooperation with Iraqi authorities. The Forensic Sciences Unit has now completed assessments of a significant number of digital devices, including hard drives and mobile phones, the content of which has been incorporated into its evidence holdings. Material retrieved from these devices, including internal ISIL payment logs, rosters of fighters and medical records have continued to support the Team in directly tying individual ISIL members to crime scenes and specific battalions responsible for the commission of international crimes.

68. The Team has also sought to increase its capacity with respect to the forensic retrieval of information and evidence from online sources, utilizing advanced open-source intelligence techniques and international forensic best practice to exploit information from previously inaccessible sources. Analytical reports produced by the Forensic Sciences Unit have identified potential new lines of inquiry and corroborative evidence, thereby strengthening case briefs and case files produced by the Team. In addition, the Team has developed advanced standard operating procedures to standardize the forensic collection of online items and secure their evidentiary value.

69. As reflected in section II of the present report, the collection of accounts from survivors and direct witnesses to ISIL crimes continues to be central to its work. Emphasis has been placed on building trust with communities that had hitherto been less willing to provide their accounts as part of criminal investigations. Engagement with community leaders of the Christian community has been particularly important in this regard. The Team has also adopted enhanced witness protection and support protocols, as well as psychosocial support measures, in order to support members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer community in coming forward to provide their accounts.

70. The Team is also grateful to the Government of Iraq and to the Kurdistan Regional Government for their responses to requests for information from the Team. United Nations system members and other international organizations have also provided evidence of relevance to ongoing investigations.

## **B. Excavation of mass graves and return of remains**

71. During the reporting period, the Team continued its support for the excavation of mass grave sites in Iraq associated with ISIL crimes and the return of remains to their families for dignified burial. With the gradual lifting of COVID-19 related restrictions, field-based excavation work has been restarted at a number of key sites. Forensic evidence obtained from such sites, combined with key visual assets such as three-dimensional mapping produced through terrestrial laser scans, have played an increasingly important role in corroborating testimonial and documentary evidence obtained by the Team.

72. The joint mass grave investigations strategy agreed between the Team and the Government of Iraq continues to provide a clear framework for the prioritization and implementation of excavation activities. Strong engagement and collaboration with the Mass Graves Directorate of the Martyrs Foundation and the Medico-Legal Directorate of the Ministry of Health of Iraq, including through an on-site visit of the Special Adviser to the Badush excavation site on 25 November, have been central to the implementation of this common strategy.

73. Reflecting the modalities agreed within this strategic framework, work has accelerated in Ninawa and Anbar Governates, including the parallel undertaking of excavation activities and the collection of ante-mortem data from families of victims in order to support the identification of remains.

74. Two phases of joint field work in May and November 2021 have been undertaken to excavate the principal mass grave site related to the execution of predominately Shia inmates from Badush prison. The complex crime scene extends over 240 metres, with an additional execution and mass grave located in the vicinity. To date, over 100 bodies and other items of evidence have been recovered and analysed. The comprehensive three-dimensional mapping carried out throughout the excavation, combined with the detailed recording of human remains and evidence in situ, will enable accurate digital reconstruction of the crime scene. As part of the support provided for the excavation of this site, the Team provided a series of on-location training sessions to Iraqi authorities with respect to the employment of a three-dimensional terrestrial laser scanner, stratigraphic excavation methods, on-site interpretation of the crime scene and mass grave excavation site management.

75. In parallel to excavation activities at the Badush site, the Team, together with the International Commission on Missing Persons, has supported Iraqi authorities in conducting an ante-mortem data collection campaign in Baghdad. Having contacted family members of victims of the massacre, this initiative led to the registration of 176 missing persons reports and the collection of over 200 DNA reference samples to support DNA-based identifications. Further support in forensic human identification efforts is being provided through engagement with the families of victims in an additional five provinces.

76. Joint missions with Iraqi authorities to assess, conduct three-dimensional surveys and excavate a mass grave site in Anbar were conducted in August and September 2021. Located in a geological sink hole in the Jazirah desert south-west of Tharthar lake, this mass grave was the scene of the execution of 15 members of the Sunni Albu Nimr tribe by ISIL on 20 October 2014. In parallel, the Team has supported two campaigns to register victims and collect DNA samples from next of kin, in collaboration with Iraqi authorities, thereby enabling families of ISIL victims to come forward and contribute to the identification effort. The Team is grateful for the support of the Governor of Anbar with respect to the conduct of these activities.

77. As reflected in section II, work has continued in the identification of remains from the mass grave sites previously excavated at Kuju village and Sulaqah. Additional identifications have matched the profiles of victims established through testimonial evidence, including women between the ages of 42 and 84 and one adolescent boy from the Sulaqah site. An additional group of males between the ages of 18 and 87 have been identified from the mass grave site in Kuju village. A return of remains ceremony for these individuals is scheduled to be held in December.

78. In line with the mass graves investigation strategy agreed with the Iraqi authorities, additional excavations of mass graves are scheduled to be conducted in Sinjar during the next reporting period. Those excavations will continue to follow the approach outlined in this section, with the Team supporting Iraqi authorities to engage with all affected communities, followed by a targeted approach to the collection of data in support of the identification of victims.

79. The Team has also agreed modalities for collaboration with the Medico-Legal Directorate with respect to the implementation of a state-of-the-art software platform at the premises of the Directorate in order to strengthen the capacity of their DNA laboratory to undertake robust, science-based identification of victims' remains. As reflected in section IV, the Team also continues to provide a range of other forms of

support to Iraqi authorities in this field, both through the delivery of advanced training and the provision of international-standard equipment.

### **C. Storage, analysis and management of evidence**

80. The Investigative Team has continued to enhance its data storage and processing capacity in order to effectively harness its rapidly expanding evidence holdings, in particular with respect to audio and visual material.

81. On 6 October 2021, the Team was presented with the international award for “Enterprise Innovation” at the annual Relativity Fest conference, which recognizes organizations who build innovative solutions in the field of legal technology and investigations. The award was received for “Zeteo”, a smart application developed by the Team in cooperation with the Microsoft Corporation and the United Nations International Computing Centre that enhances audio, text and visual evidence relating to ISIL crimes through automatic transcription and translation, facial identification and video indexing. Zeteo was recognized as a paradigm-shifting innovation in the field of evidence analysis.

82. Practical steps have also been taken to fully harness the capabilities of Zeteo. An initial triage and review process has been completed in relation to video content held by the Team, leading to the identification of priority video and audio files for incorporation into the application, totalling over 100 days of continual multimedia content. The Team has also continued redefining its custom artificial intelligence models within Zeteo, supporting the more effective identification of objects, known places, key scenes, phrases, logos and spoken words in its audio and video material. Further enhancements include improved facial detection through the integration of over 23 unique facial attributes in the processing of relevant images. It is anticipated that this will allow for significant improvements in the ability of the Team to identify known ISIL perpetrators within its video archives, and will also reduce by 50 per cent the time required for staff to review such content.

83. With a view to supporting the mental health and well-being of staff responsible for analysing disturbing material, the Team has also enhanced the capacity of Zeteo to automatically detect, flag and blur violent and other graphic content. By using artificial intelligence to conduct an initial review of violent material, the Team has sought to reduce unnecessary exposure of its staff to the most graphic video and audio content.

84. In order to further strengthen the basis for its digital evidence collection and processing activities, the Team has also procured additional local infrastructure and disaster recovery storage, enhancing its ability to receive, store and process the evidence collected. In addition, drawing on a financial contribution from the Government of Denmark, the Team has developed and commenced the implementation of a long-term plan to support anticipated technological infrastructure demands.

## **IV. Delivering accountability in collaboration with national actors**

85. The effective delivery of the mandate of the Investigative Team continues to be founded on close partnerships with national actors across Iraq. During the reporting period, the Team further strengthened its relationship with national authorities, religious leaders, non-governmental organizations and other entities.



## **A. Engagement and cooperation with the Government of Iraq**

86. Upon assuming his responsibilities on 1 October 2021, the Special Adviser prioritized engagement with senior members of the Government of Iraq in order to strengthen the basis for collective action. In this regard, the Special Adviser was delighted to hold high-level meetings with the President and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq following his arrival in Baghdad. During those consultations, the Special Adviser underlined his commitment to ensuring that the work of the Team reflected a common partnership with Iraqi authorities, with the collective objective of delivering trials to international standards reflecting the scale and nature of crimes committed by ISIL against the people of Iraq.

87. Reflecting the central importance of cooperation with the Iraqi judiciary, the Special Adviser also had productive meetings with the Chief Justice and Head of the Supreme Judicial Council, as well as the Head of the Counter-Terrorism Court of Ninawa.

88. Collaboration with the National Coordinating Committee remains central to the effective conduct of investigative activities by the Team, in line with the common strategic frameworks agreed during previous reporting periods. In his initial meeting with the new Chairman of the National Coordinating Committee, the Special Adviser held highly productive discussions addressing areas in which collaboration between the Team and Iraqi authorities could be further deepened.

89. As reflected throughout the present report, the Team has continued to work closely with the National Coordinating Committee with respect to the excavation of mass grave sites, the return and burial of the remains of victims and the delivery of capacity-building programmes to Iraqi authorities.

90. As part of his initial visit to northern Iraq, the Special Adviser also held productive meetings with the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Region, expressing his appreciation for the important contributions made by local authorities to the work of the Team as supported by the Office of the Coordinator for International Advocacy of the Kurdistan Regional Government. The Office of Rescued Yazidi Affairs of the Kurdistan Regional Government and the Commission for Investigation and Gathering Evidence have been particularly important partners in this regard.

## **B. Strengthening the capacity of Iraqi authorities**

91. The Investigative Team has continued to expand its efforts to share knowledge and provide technical assistance to Iraqi authorities in accordance with paragraph 39 of its terms of reference. This assistance has spanned a number of key strategic fields, including evidence digitization, mass grave site excavations, the analysis of digital battlefield evidence, the preservation of evidence and forensic reporting techniques.

92. Collectively, the provision of these forms of support has served to strengthen the evidence base on which joint case-building activities can be conducted between the Team and members of the Iraqi judiciary, which, in turn, build on the training provided, during the reporting period, to Iraqi investigative judges on core elements of international criminal law.

93. With respect to the digitization of documentary evidence held by Iraqi authorities, and as also reflected in section III of the present report, the Team has significantly deepened its provision of support to Iraqi authorities and those of the Kurdistan Region. In line with the strategic plan agreed with the Supreme Judicial Council, the Team is now on track to support the Iraqi judiciary in digitizing ISIL-related judicial case files at eight priority counter-terrorism courts. The project will

also be deploying to Tazah Khurmatu to support the digitization of thousands of medical reports and witness statements connected to alleged chemical weapon attacks carried out by ISIL.

94. Through effective coordination with the National Coordinating Committee, digitization support will also be extended to relevant Iraqi security services, with initial support provided with respect to documentary materials and digital devices held by the Directorate of Military Intelligence. As part of this work, members of the Directorate have been trained in the digitization of paper records and data acquisition from digital devices using XRY software and forensic imaging equipment. Over 16,000 pages have already been digitized and data acquired from over 150 digital devices.

95. In the Kurdistan Region, the team has worked with eight local authorities to support the development of standard operating procedures with respect to the identification, preparation, transfer, reception and processing of records. Proof of concept of this collaboration has already been achieved through the completion of initial digitization work at the Commission for Investigation and Gathering Evidence in line with international standards and best practice.

96. The Team has also provided training in digital forensics and enhanced open-source investigation techniques to Iraqi authorities, in order to support the collection of evidence relevant to the prosecution of crimes within the mandate of the Team. Training with respect to open-source investigations has focused on harnessing advanced acquisition techniques while ensuring the collection of evidence is lawful, targeted and proportionate in line with best practice.

97. As referenced in section III, assistance continued to be provided to national authorities with respect to the excavation of mass grave sites in Iraq. The Team has provided practical training to national counterparts in areas including the use of three-dimensional terrestrial laser scanners, the post-processing of data to digitally reconstruct crime scenes and the use of mapping software and geographical information system applications in mass grave investigations. A “train the trainers” programme has also been delivered in the use of digital survey instrumentation.

98. Combined with these structured training activities, forensic specialists with the Team continue to provide mentoring to Iraqi counterparts through routine planning and debriefing sessions for each mass grave investigation that has been undertaken, during which information and the interpretation of forensic evidence collected is shared and discussed. This consistent technical-level engagement supports the alignment of activities of national authorities with the investigative priorities of the Team. With a view to consolidating good practices and lessons learned from this experience, a two-day joint lessons-learned workshop was held in July 2021 between relevant members of the Investigative Team, Iraqi and Kurdistan Region authorities and the International Commission on Missing Persons.

99. Allied to the provision of both theoretical and practical training in this area, the Team has supported enhancements to the technical infrastructure of the relevant national authorities that are responsible for mass grave excavation activities. This has included the donation by the Team of two contaminant extraction fume cupboards to the Mass Graves Directorate in order to support the handling and processing of DNA samples in line with international forensic best practice.

100. With a view to ultimately harnessing the evidentiary material developed through its collaboration with Iraqi authorities in judicial proceedings, the Team has also continued to take forward the implementation of its agreement with the Supreme Judicial Council of Iraq to support Iraqi investigative judges in the development of

case files for the prosecution of ISIL members for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.

101. In this regard, the Team has completed the delivery of a 10-part training course on international criminal law for 29 senior members of the Iraqi judiciary, covering areas including the definition of core international crimes; internationally recognized modes of participation and liability; fair trial rights; and the relationship of Islamic law to international criminal law concepts. Focus has now moved to the provision of one-to-one mentoring to relevant judges in the development of individual priority case files previously identified through cooperation with the Iraqi judiciary. Initial support will be provided to investigative judges in Rusafah, Karkh and Mosul, as well as the Commission for Investigation and Gathering Evidence in the Kurdistan Region. The Team remains grateful to the Government of Denmark for the financial support provided in support of this area of activity.

102. The Team has also continued its support with respect to the establishment of a dedicated Witness Protection Department by the Government of Iraq.

### **C. Working in partnership with all elements of Iraqi society**

103. To ensure that its investigative work is informed by the knowledge and experience of all affected communities in Iraq, the Investigative Team has continued to prioritize its engagement with religious actors, survivor groups, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community leaders.

104. The UNITAD-NGO Dialogue Forum continues to serve as an important platform for knowledge-sharing and the exchange of best practices with Iraqi and international non-governmental organizations in areas relevant to the investigative work of the Team. Over the past six months, the Forum has convened two virtual events: the semi-annual plenary meeting, held on 13 July, and a third thematic round-table meeting, on the theme of “Psychosocial support: engaging survivors in accountability efforts”, held on 18 November. In the thematic round table, participants discussed how the Investigative Team can strengthen its cooperation with non-governmental organizations in order to facilitate the provision of effective psychosocial support to victims and survivors of ISIL crimes.

105. As reflected in those discussions, the Witness Protection and Support Unit has continued to strengthen its partnerships with relevant non-governmental organizations and national authorities in order to expand the network of mental health and psychosocial support service providers to which the Team can refer witnesses and survivors for specialized treatment. During the reporting period, the Team has provided 20 training sessions for entities that provide psychosocial support to survivors of ISIL crimes.

106. The Team recently completed a detailed mapping exercise, identifying key non-governmental organizations that are in possession of documentary and battlefield evidence which has not yet been incorporated into the evidence holdings of the Team. In an initial operational step based on this analysis, the Team has concluded an arrangement which will allow for the transfer to the Team of 22,000 survivor and witness statements. The Team has also put initial plans in place to conduct a similar exercise with civil society organizations focused on the documentation of the destruction of cultural heritage by ISIL in Iraq. The Team is grateful for the financial support of the United States with respect to this area of work.

107. As part of his initial visit to northern Iraq, the Special Adviser convened a round-table meeting with Christian faith leaders, representing different churches from across Iraq. Discussions focused on how the Team can engage further with Christian

religious leadership in order to encourage victims of ISIL crimes to come forward and provide their accounts. The Christian faith leadership has already provided significant support to the Team in this regard.

108. In January 2022, the Team will jointly launch the “Interfaith Dialogue Series” together with the Office of the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide. This series will seek to use the landmark “Interfaith statement on the survivors and victims of ISIL”, concluded by Iraqi religious leaders in March 2020, as a framework for more in-depth engagement with faith communities in order to empower individuals and support the delivery of effective criminal justice in relation to ISIL crimes.

## **V. Cooperation in support of the activities of the Investigative Team**

### **A. Engaging Member States and providing support for ongoing national proceedings**

109. In line with its mandate and terms of reference, the Team has continued to ensure that its investigative and analytical work is focused and structured in a manner that can effectively support ongoing accountability processes.

110. Work has continued with Iraqi counterparts in order to strengthen the evidentiary and legal basis on which proceedings may be taken forward in Iraq. Pursuant to arrangements established with the Iraqi judiciary referred to in the previous report, the Team has provided a detailed case brief and associated linkage charts in relation to the use by ISIL of money service businesses as key facilitators of their financing. In the upcoming reporting period, the Team will expand its cooperation with relevant investigative judges in this area.

111. In his initial meetings with Iraqi counterparts, the Special Adviser has also underlined his readiness, following the recent federal elections, to provide support and guidance with respect to national initiatives aimed at the establishment of a legal basis for the prosecution of ISIL members in Iraq for international crimes.

112. In parallel, the Team has continued to strengthen its ability to provide support for ongoing national proceedings in Member States. A total of 14 States have requested the Team’s assistance with respect to ongoing investigations and prosecutions.

113. During the reporting period, the Team has provided support for several investigations which, it is anticipated, will lead to judicial proceedings in the coming reporting period. The ability of the Team to collect testimonial evidence from witnesses in direct response to requests for assistance, combined with its capacity to identify corroborating internal ISIL documentation from digital battlefield evidence, has been of particular assistance in supporting investigations by national authorities.

114. In one case, support was provided to Portuguese authorities with respect to the arrest of two individuals suspected of having formed part of ISIL local enforcement networks during its period of occupation of Mosul. Through cooperation with Iraqi authorities and engagement with a network of witnesses in Mosul, the Team provided testimonial evidence and internal ISIL documentation that supported the apprehension of individuals considered to be an ongoing security threat.

115. In order to support engagement with national authorities and its broader analytical work, the Team has established a dedicated database to collate and cross-reference evidence relating to foreign terrorist fighters. On that basis, the Team has started to perform network analyses, linking perpetrators of different nationalities to

one another, to victims, to specific crimes and locations, as well as to call data records and financial transactions. That work has supported the identification of patterns across the activities of ISIL members of different nationalities, as well as the detection of overlapping areas of interest across different national authorities with respect to key persons of interest. By combining the structuring of data with its enhanced e-discovery capacities, the Team has also been able to proactively identify perpetrators of specific nationalities within its evidence holdings.

## **B. Ensuring coherence with United Nations system entities**

116. During the reporting period, the Investigative Team strengthened cooperative modalities with well-established partners within the United Nations system, while also putting in place new channels for collaboration. Engagement with United Nations counter-terrorism entities was deepened, reflecting the increasingly holistic approach taken by national authorities and international organizations with respect to the issue of accountability for ISIL crimes.

117. On 25 June, as part of United Nations Counter-Terrorism Week, the Team co-hosted a side event with the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate and the Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations, entitled “Towards ensuring comprehensive and meaningful accountability: linkages between terrorism and serious violations of international humanitarian law”. The event provided a forum in which Member States, United Nations entities and other actors were able to consider the opportunities for, and ongoing challenges faced by, national authorities in effectively prosecuting terrorist acts and related serious violations of international humanitarian law in the context of the foreign terrorist fighter phenomenon.

118. On 9 September, the Team provided a briefing to the Working Group on Emerging Threats and Critical Infrastructure Protection of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact, addressing its line of investigation into the development and use of chemical and biological weapons by ISIL in Iraq. This has given rise to the identification of a number of new potential avenues for cooperation with relevant members of the Compact, in line with respective mandates. The Team has also continued to contribute as a member of the Global Framework for United Nations Support on Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq Third Country National Returnees.

119. During the reporting period, the Team has also continued to contribute to the crisis management mechanism led by UNAMI to address the COVID-19 pandemic, ensuring operational activities are conducted in line with preventive and response measures.

## **C. Cooperating with other entities**

120. The Investigative Team has sought to further strengthen the engagement of academic institutions, private sector entities and other partners in its work.

121. Continued cooperation with the National Attorneys General Training and Research Institute resulted in the provision of an advanced child forensic interview training programme for more than 20 national and international staff members. The Team has also continued its cooperation with the Institute for International Criminal Investigations, resulting in the development and implementation of trainings on the financial dimensions of war crimes and interview planning, specifically tailored to the investigative context of the Team, with national staff among the beneficiaries.

122. The Team has also continued its collaboration with the Human Rights in Trauma Mental Health programme at Stanford University in order to strengthen practices

pertaining to trauma-informed aspects of investigations. Following the joint publication of the *Trauma-Informed Investigations Field Guide* during the last reporting period, a complementary *Reference Guide* has been developed, providing a more in-depth collation of resources to be drawn on by practitioners in their engagement with vulnerable witnesses. That collaboration has also supported the compilation of a comprehensive expert impact report outlining the psychosocial impact of intense trauma on individuals and their communities.

123. The Team has also continued to benefit from its associate membership of the European Union Network for investigation and prosecution of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, supported by the European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation (Eurojust). Through its participation in the thirtieth meeting of the Network, on 9 and 10 November 2021, the Team was able to outline the range of support it may be able to provide to participating national authorities in the investigation and prosecution of individuals responsible for crimes falling within its mandate.

124. The Team has also been able to harness networks of national authorities supported by the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol) through its arrangement, concluded during the last reporting period, with the International Crimes Unit of the Netherlands. The implementation of that arrangement has led to the identification of at least one case in which the Investigative Team may be able to provide tangible support to ongoing national proceedings.

## **VI. Promoting accountability globally**

125. In line with his mandate pursuant to paragraph 3 of resolution [2379 \(2017\)](#), the Special Adviser has continued his efforts to promote, throughout the world, accountability for crimes committed by ISIL and to work with survivors to ensure that their interests are fully recognized in achieving accountability for ISIL crimes. Continuing with the approach from previous reporting periods, the Special Adviser has sought to draw on the lessons learned from the investigative work of the Team in Iraq order to promote good practice globally with respect to the investigation and prosecution of ISIL crimes.

126. On 12 November, the Team co-hosted a special event in The Hague, the Netherlands, with the Government of Iraq and the International Criminal Court, entitled “Collective action towards accountability for ISIL crimes: delivering justice through partnerships”. The event provided the opportunity for the Team to share some of the successes achieved through its investigative activities to date, emphasizing the need for strong partnerships with all actors as well as the integration of advanced technological tools in the exploitation of battlefield evidence and other forms of evidence. Participants highlighted that through the collective work of the Team, national authorities and non-governmental organizations, solutions have been forged so as to allow domestic investigators and prosecutors to effectively address challenges previously viewed as preventing the effective investigation and prosecution of ISIL crimes.

127. On 2 December, the Team will host a further special event at United Nations Headquarters in New York, on the theme “An economy of violence: ensuring global accountability for ISIL financing”. Focusing on investigations into the financial networks used to support the commission of crimes by ISIL in Iraq, the event will provide a forum through which the Team is able to share its experiences in the collection of evidence with respect to ISIL financial crimes and consider how ongoing challenges faced by national authorities in this area can be further addressed through collective action across international, domestic and non-governmental actors.

## VII. Funding and resources

128. During the reporting period, the Team faced financial pressures, stemming in particular from restrictions in terms of its staffing costs. As a result, extrabudgetary contributions remain crucial to the effective implementation of the mandate of the Team.

129. The Team therefore remains grateful for the financial contributions of Member States to the trust fund established to support its activities, as reflected throughout the present report. The reporting period saw two Member States make contributions for the first time: Finland and Hungary. The contribution received from Hungary will assist in accelerating investigations into crimes against members of the Christian community in Iraq, while the contribution provided by Finland will enable the expansion of the work of the Witness Protection and Support Unit, with an emphasis on the provision of capacity-building to national actors in the field of psychosocial support.

130. A number of existing donors also confirmed their continuing support to the work of the Team. The United States has confirmed that additional funding to continue mass grave investigations into the second quarter of 2023 will be provided, as well as supplementary funds to strengthen investigations focused on minorities through enhancing the documentation efforts of Iraqi civil society groups. The Government of Germany provided additional funding to the Team's Financial Crimes Unit in the pursuit of holding ISIL financiers accountable for their crimes, while the Government of the Netherlands renewed its support to the witness protection and support activities of the Team.

131. The field investigation activities of the Team have also been supported through contributions by the Governments of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States, while the Gender Crimes and Children Unit has received support from the Governments of Denmark and the United Arab Emirates.

132. As outlined in sections II and III, the Team has also drawn on financial contributions in the strengthening of its evidence collection, analysis and processing systems. This includes a large-scale digitization project funded by the European Union and an evidence analysis project funded by the Government of Denmark. In addition to these thematically focused contributions, the Team is grateful to have received unearmarked contributions from a number of Member States, which have been essential in supporting the operations of the Team on the ground, including contributions from the Governments of Cyprus, the Philippines, Qatar and Slovakia.

133. The ongoing progress in the work of the Team has revealed new areas for which additional financial support is required. Dedicated resources to enhance investigations into the ISIL chemical weapons programme and the destruction of cultural heritage would be of particular priority. In addition, given the scale and complexity of the evidence being collected, financial support is required in order to implement necessary technological innovations aimed at ensuring the effective processing and exploitation of these data.

134. The Investigative Team continues to encourage further contributions of funds, equipment and services from States and from regional and intergovernmental organizations in support of the implementation of its mandate, in accordance with paragraph 14 of resolution [2379 \(2017\)](#).

## VIII. Looking forward: moving from investigations to trials

135. In the coming reporting period, the Team will continue to implement its strategic vision and provisional completion strategy, as outlined in section VIII of its previous report. The key priorities of the Investigative Team in the next six months will include:

(a) Completion of case briefs with respect to the following priority areas of investigation:

- (i) Crimes committed by ISIL against the Christian community in Iraq;
- (ii) Development and use of chemical and biological weapons by ISIL;

(b) Completion of the first phase of the evidence digitization project, with a total of 11,000,000 documents digitized and available for use in the development of case files in relation to priority persons of interest, in cooperation with Iraqi authorities;

(c) Provision of support, upon the request of the Government of Iraq, with respect to the adoption of national legislation in Iraq allowing for the prosecution of ISIL members for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide;

(d) Completion of three initial joint case files with the Iraqi judiciary in relation to priority persons of interest who could be tried under such national legislation, once adopted;

(e) Deepening of cooperation with the Iraqi judiciary with respect to ISIL financial networks, including the provision of additional strategic reports by the Team addressing, inter alia, the functioning of Bayt al-Mal – the central ISIL treasury;

(f) Further strengthening of assistance provided to national proceedings globally, in cooperation with Iraqi authorities.

136. The Team will continue to implement these priorities in close cooperation with the National Coordinating Committee and key partners across Iraq, including survivor groups, affected communities and religious leaders.

## IX. Conclusion

137. In the three years since the commencement of the work of the Team in Iraq, the unique model for accountability set out in the text of Security Council resolution [2379 \(2017\)](#) has been converted into an expanding legal basis on which ISIL members may be prosecuted for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. Through the establishment of structural case briefs addressing crimes committed against affected communities in Iraq, through the development of detailed case files tying the actions of specific ISIL members to these crimes, and by working proactively with the Iraqi authorities and those in other States to harness this evidence, a potential turning point has been reached in delivering justice for the victims and survivors of ISIL crimes.

138. The Investigative Team remains steadfast in its commitment to support the Government of Iraq in seizing this opportunity, building on the global leadership it demonstrated in requesting the Council to establish the Team through Security Council resolution [2379 \(2017\)](#).

139. The next steps in leveraging this progress are now both clear and achievable. By consolidating the evidential basis for prosecutions through the investigative work of the Team in cooperation with the Iraqi authorities, and by strengthening the legal framework for their use in national prosecutions, a broad platform will be set through



which comprehensive accountability may be achieved for all communities targeted by ISIL.

140. These steps will be delivered in line with the core principles that have guided the work of the Team since 2018: innovation and partnership. They will be taken together, side-by-side with survivors, non-governmental organizations, Iraqi national authorities and the Security Council.

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