



## UNMAS Iraq Presents its Work to Senior German Delegation in Baghdad

**Baghdad, 12 September 2019** – At the invitation of the Government of Germany, the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) presented its activities to a delegation comprising HE Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, Minister of Defence of the Federal Republic of Germany and Dr. Ole Diehl, German Ambassador to Iraq, in addition to senior officials representing multiple international organizations.

As the largest donor of UNMAS explosive hazard management (EHM) activities in Iraq, Germany has been a crucial enabler in the safe, dignified, and voluntary return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) to their areas of origin.

*“Too many IDPs are still not able return to their homes because explosive hazards threaten their lives and prevent reconstruction in their communities. Germany proudly supports UNMAS explosive hazard clearance and risk education approach. Our support through the Foreign Office funding is an important component of our comprehensive approach in Iraq,”* said Dr. Diehl.

Since October 2016, UNMAS Iraq has cleared more than 50,000 explosive hazards, of which 2,000 are improvised explosive devices, and delivered risk education and life-saving messages to nearly one million Iraqis. As a priority, UNMAS works in conjunction with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) as the gateway to stabilization and reconstruction, as no development or rehabilitation activities can be completed so long as land remains uncleared from explosive hazards.

Speaking at the event, Ms. Clara Vaz, Senior Gender Advisor at UNMAS Iraq, said: *“Consecutive conflicts in Iraq have created contamination conditions unlike anywhere else in the world. Lessons learned have also shown that mine action is an economic empowerment venture, and in a country with a noticeable dearth of employment, there is opportunity within this field.”*

*“This can, however, further compound existing inequalities if women are left out of mine action. It will fail to capture the experiences, voices and needs of half the population. UNMAS Iraq actively promotes both gender mainstreaming and women’s empowerment in these non-traditional fields of work: as fully capable and expert role models.”*

Through its activities in Sinjar, UNMAS has taken a unique approach to clearance operations. The teams are mixed-gender, comprising more than 50 per cent women, with the majority of the Yezidi and Muslim searchers hailing from the region and its nearby surrounding areas. This allows a personal connection to many, and inspires significant passion for their work.

Ms. Hanan, one of the 21 women working in Sinjar, spoke on the particular meaning of clearance to her and her community: *“I’m proud because we are saving lives by removing improvised explosive devices that had been used by ISIS during the war, and the most important thing about our job is that we are working so the people who are living and suffering in camps can return back to their homes.”*

UNMAS would like to thank Germany for its generous invitation to present its work, and for its continuous support to UNMAS EHM activities in Iraq.

### Contact

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