

EUROPEAN EXTERNAL ACTION SERVICE



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Brussels, **20 JUIN 2013**
D(2013) 2110966

Dear Petitioner,

The HR/VP follows closely the situation of Christian minorities in Iraq and has on several occasions publicly raised her concern over the continuing unacceptable violence across the country. Likewise, the EU in the latest Foreign Affairs Council conclusions of 22 April has expressed its concerns over the deterioration of human rights situation in Iraq and called on all parties to refrain from the use of violence. The EU equally calls the Iraqi Government to protect human rights of all Iraqis regardless of ethnicity or creed and to make intensive efforts to create an environment of inclusive participation.

Human rights are a prominent element of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement. With its implementation, the EU will be able to enhance its dialogue with the Iraqi authorities, including on the basis of their international obligations and further commitments made during the Universal Periodic Review.

In practical terms, the EU provides technical assistance in the area of rule of law and human rights which are key elements for addressing the challenges of religious minorities, including supporting the civil society and contributing to the institutional building such as to the Independent High Commission for Human Rights.

The EU will carry on promoting and defending freedom of religion or belief worldwide. As recalled in February 2011 Council Conclusions "on intolerance, discrimination and violence on the basis of religion or belief", all persons belonging to religious communities and minorities should be able to practice their religion and worship freely, individually or in community with others, without fear of intolerance or attacks. The EU guidelines on freedom of religion or belief, which will be adopted at the end of June, will emphasize on the need to focus on the issues of violence and discrimination, and will provide EU staff worldwide with concrete tools and guidance to uphold this universal human right.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'M. Ferrero-Waldner', written over a light blue horizontal line.