Foreign & Commonwealth Office (UK)

Baroness Anelay visits Iraq and Turkey

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From 8 – 12 November, Baroness Anelay, FCO Minister for Human Rights and the Prime Minister's Special Representative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict, visited Istanbul, Baghdad and Erbil. The visit focussed on those affected by the conflict in Iraq and Syria. The Minister announced new UK support to projects that support women's rights and gender equality and launched the Arabic version of the International Protocol on the Documentation and Investigation of Sexual Violence in Conflict.

In Iraq, Baroness Anelay visited the Harsham Internally Displaced Persons Camp in Erbil to hear directly from some of those forced to flee from ISIL's violence and brutality. The Minister announced up to £750,000 to help implement Iraq's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security and over £65,000 to the Iraqi Al-Amal Association to support their work with young people.

In Turkey, the Minister met the Syrian National Coalition and civil society activists to discuss how the international community can better respond to the appalling levels of conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence as well as how to empower women to participate in resolving the conflict in Syria. The Minister also met UK-funded medical professionals, who are documenting incidences of sexual violence in the conflict with a view to deterring such violence and ending impunity for it in the future.

Baroness Anelay said:

I am delighted to have made my first trip to Iraq and Turkey to see first-hand the work that is being done to support women and girls and protect human rights. I was impressed by the resilience of the Iraqi and Syrian people and their determination in the face of extreme hardship.

There is still a long way to go, but my visit to Baghdad and Erbil has reinforced in my mind the enormity of Iraq's potential. The international community is working hard to complement the efforts of the Iraqi government, and the UK, for its part, will stand shoulder to shoulder with the Iraqis until that dream of a secure, prosperous future becomes a reality.

In Syria, the UK remains committed to supporting those who reject the brutality of Assad and barbarism of ISIL. In addition to the £1.12bn of humanitarian aid allocated since the start of the crisis, the UK has delivered over £85m of non-humanitarian aid to support stability,

resilience, counter extremism and promote human rights and accountability. I met Syrians delivering some of these projects, and I was left with no doubt about their courageous dedication to a more stable and inclusive Syria, a goal the UK, alongside international partners, will continue to support.

Notes to Editors

In Iraq, the Minister met the Iraqi Minister of Justice and the Kurdistan Regional Government to reinforce the importance of putting in place measures to meet the needs of survivors of sexual violence.

The International Protocol on the Documentation and Investigation of Sexual Violence in Conflict is designed to promote accountability for crimes of sexual violence by providing first responders on the ground with guidance on how to gather information and document rape and sexual violence, while also providing support to survivors. Its use will help strengthen the evidence base for future prosecutions.

Iraq's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security promotes the participation of women in peace discussions and the prevention of sexual violence.

The Iraqi Al-Amal Association works with young people to promote gender equality and raise awareness of gender-based violence.

Further information

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