

Nineveh Plain Defense Fund

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Response Title: **Augmenting Nineveh Plain Security Through Local Forces**

BAA-267-Ninewa-2017: Building Resilience in the Ninewa Plains and Western Ninewa

We present the opportunity to augment the current local security provided by the Nineveh Plain Protection Units (NPU) to ensure adequate repatriation of Christian Assyrians into the Nineveh Plain. Assyrians, including Chaldeans and Syriacs, have historically comprised approximately 40% of the inhabitants of the Nineveh Plain and represent the area's largest non-Muslim group. In light of the past failures of both Iraqi Security Forces and the Kurdish Peshmerga, return of the native Nineveh Plain inhabitants will require security that local inhabitants can trust. Those displaced considering return to their homes justifiably fear small, targeted attacks by remnants of ISIL directed specially against Assyrians as Christians. Only the provision of local security by locals themselves can effectively provide the security necessary to screen out and prevent such terrorist attacks.

The Nineveh Plain Protection Units (NPU), politically sponsored by the Assyrian Democratic Movement (ADM), the largest Assyrian political party with representation in the Iraqi Parliament, are the only fully Christian Assyrian local security force authorized by the Iraqi National Security Forces to operate in the Nineveh Plain. The NPU currently has bases established throughout the Nineveh Plain, including Alqosh and Qaraqosh (Bakhdada). The NPU has received training from the US military in preparation for its role in Operation Conquest, and the NPU participated in frontline offensive actions against ISIL in October, 2016. For the past year, the NPU has provided security and been operating checkpoints in and around Qaraqosh, Bartella, and Karamles. With the expansion of Iraqi federal control of the Nineveh Plain, the NPU has expanded its operations throughout the Nineveh Plain.

The NPU has earned the trust of local Assyrians. As reported by the Knights of Columbus, it was the presence of the NPU that gave 24 year old Maher Lahib and his family the courage to return to their home in Karamles and reopen their grocery store and farm. "We have faith in God," he said, "and also the [NPU] guards who protect the village."¹ The soldiers of the NPU, themselves local inhabitants from the various Assyrian religious denominations, including Chaldean and Syriac, know the area's residents and readily identify outsiders who may pose a threat.

Thus, the NPU must play a pivotal role if the repatriation efforts are to have any measurable success. And yet, the human resources of the NPU are limited. Currently, there are approximately 500 NPU soldiers trained and receiving salaries as part of the Iraqi Security Forces. Efforts to expand to 1,500 soldiers were thwarted, first by a veto exercised by the Kurdish Peshmerga through Nineveh Liberation Operation Command, and later by a Iraqi Security Forces order freezing the troop size of all local and tribal forces. While this order was aimed at limiting the growth in Sunni tribal forces, it nevertheless impacted the NPU by cancelling the previous authorization to expand. Nevertheless, the NPU has received authorization from the Iraqi Government to augment its forces with volunteers.

We present the immediate opportunity to augment the NPU with 1,000 volunteer forces for one year in this crucial period of repatriation. This time will allow for initial repatriation efforts to take hold and build momentum while the NPU seeks and gains greater resources and support as part of Iraq's long-term security structure in this post-conflict period. In light of the NPU's role in Operation Conquest, the NPU is well-positioned for long-term support. Moreover, on November 25, 2017, Iraqi Rapporteur of Parliament Imad Youkhana of the ADM, who serves on the Iraqi Parliamentary Committee of Security and Defense, was named NPU Political Chair, thus increasing the NPU's profile and prospects for inclusion in Iraq's long-term security structure. With the support of USAID, we would train 250 men a month for four months, and once trained, the men would complete service for the remainder of the year. Each volunteer would receive a stipend of

¹ <http://www.kofc.org/en/columbia/detail/iraqi-christians-return-home.html>

████ a month, and the NPU would receive █████ a month for rations and non-munitions supplies. To ensure adequate monitoring and patrols, 10 communication towers with radios, 300 walkie-talkies, and 8 pick-up truck vehicles would also be supplied. Any light arms would be provided by Iraqi National Security Forces or utilize current NPU supplies.

The Nineveh Plain Defense Fund (NPDF) presents a unique opportunity to provide this crucial augmentation of NPU forces. The NPDF was established as a collaboration of Assyrians in Iraq, the United States, and Canada to create a direct funding mechanism to provide non-munitions support to the NPU legally and with accountability. As an Illinois nonprofit corporation, the Nineveh Plain Defense Fund is registered with the Department of Justice under the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA) to represent the foreign principals of the NPU and the ADM.

Our board includes expertise in business, policy, and finance from our officers in the United States and Canada, as well as a high-level member of the Assyrian Democratic Movement and an elected Minister of Parliament in the Kurdistan Regional Government who is serving as the NPDF Liason to the NPU, and the Chief of Staff for Iraqi Member of Parliament Younadam Kanna, the leader of the Assyrian Democratic Movement. These Iraqi-based board members provide on-the-ground monitoring and oversight over our resources, and we have developed financial transfer and monitoring policies that provide strict oversight for all spending. Furthermore, providing additional oversight is the NPDF's legal counsel, also registered as an agent for the NPU and ADM under FARA, of a former Inspector General of the Department of Defense who served in the Coalition Provisional Authority after the Iraq War.

Thus, the NPDF presents a unique vehicle by which USAID may meaningfully impact local security efforts with an unprecedented level of accountability at this critical juncture. As a result of our internal policies and procedures we have developed to maintain our registration under FARA and assure compliance with US law, we have the ability to create a chain of custody that ensures that the resources would be received to their intended recipients and end-products.

This project can be implemented for █████ over one year. Over 97% of the total, █████, are direct costs to fund the volunteer stipends, supplies, telecommunication equipment, and the vehicles. Legal and administrative costs represent a modest 2.3% of total costs. A full allocation of the costs over the year is outlined in the table below.

Month	Volunteers	Operational Costs			Overhead		Total Costs
		Stipends	Supplies	Equipment	Legal	Admin	
				telecom and transport*			
		per volunteer	per volunteer				
1	250						
2	500						
3	750						
4	1000						
5	1000						
6	1000						
7	1000						
8	1000						
9	1000						
10	1000						
11	1000						
12	1000						

* 10 telecommunication towers, 300 walkie-talkies, and 8 vehicles