



DOSSIER ABOUT:

BROKEN RELATION BETWEEN KRG (KDP AND THE YAZIDI'S

How the KRG Restrictions Harm Yazidi Recovery

Some evidence about Sinjar and KDP policy regarding Yazidi`s

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1. URGENT CALL BY YAZIDI-SINJAR COUNCIL AND ITS YBŞ SELF-DEFENSE FORCE

Dear Sir/Madam,

The situation of our people in Sinjar, Iraq, is well-known. In 2014 we have been attacked by ISIS after the KDP Peshmerga and the Iraqi army left us defenseless. ISIS committed a genocide against our people. Then the Syrian Kurdish YPG entered Iraq and liberated and saved many of our people. The PKK joined the fight as well.

However not all of us left. Those of us capable to defend ourselves were equipped by the YPG and via any other means we could find and in this way, we created our self-defense forces (YBŞ & YJS) at Sinjar Mountain. Step by step we drove ISIS away and we created our own Sinjar Council for those who returned.

In 2015/2016 the KDP Peshmerga returned. Although they did drive away some ISIS, they refused to accept the structures and self-defense forces we created. Their goal before and since then has been to dominate us, not to liberate us. Refugees are still stopped by the KDP to return. The KDP does not

allow aid and rebuilding to the areas that are protected by our own forces and governed by our own Council.

Since the night of 2 March the KDP Peshmerga under leadership of President Barzani of the Kurdistan Regional Government attack the Yazidi YBŞ/YJŞ in the places Sinune and Khanesor in Sinjar.

This is a final attempt to break any independent will of the Yazidi's. This attempt follows the visit of Barzani to Erdogan.

However, after the genocide under ISIS the Yazidi people will not become again defenceless pawns dominated by another leader that the Yazidi's of Sinjar did not elect at any moment. The YBŞ and Sinjar Council did put forward a proposal for negotiations with the KDP Peshmerga but these proposals for talks were ignored. The goal of Barzani is to subjugate the Yazidi's at all costs. The world has recognised that the Yazidi's were victims of ISIS. Will the world stand up against this violence this time in time?

For this reason, the YBŞ and Sinjar Council call on the US, EU and all other Kurdish parties as well as the Iraqi Government to exert their influence and put the utmost pressure on Barzani to stop this attack and withdraw immediately.

We also refer to the European Parliament resolution of October 26th, 2016 that strongly advocates that Sinjar, Tal Afar and Nineveh Plain should receive a special status and should be governed by the people from the areas itself in accordance with the constitution of Iraq. The attempts by the KDP to oppress us demonstrates very clearly that we need to have some form of self-governance and political empowerment as described above and be able to govern our own security. If there is no political empowerment and no security that we control, we cannot stay in Iraq.

The attempts by the KDP to oppress us demonstrate very clearly that we need to have some form of self-governance and political empowerment as described above and be able to govern our own security. We ask the US and EU to support this new autonomous province and the rebuilding of Sinjar, Tal Afar and Nineveh Plain. It is our last hope to be able to stay in our homelands.

In order to clarify one thing; it should be clear that this is not a conflict of Yazidi's against Yazidi's. The military tension is between Yazidi's and non-Yazidi KDP mercenaries. See below to the Reuters¹ report that confirms this.

The world has recognised that the Yazidi's were victims of ISIS. Will the world stand up against this violence in time this time?

The US and EU need to tell KDP (Barzani) to stop and withdrew immediately!

The YBŞ and Sinjar Council call the EU and US again to help to start negotiations as necessary alternative to this violence.

¹ Reuters report: <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-kurds-sinjar-idUSKBN16A0HV> (this report clarifies that Barzani attacks the Yazidi's with non-Yazidi forces from outside Sinjar.)

2. Iraq: KRG Restrictions Harm Yezidi Recovery (Human Rights Watch)

Disproportionate Limits on Goods Entering, Leaving Sinjar

(Beirut) – The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in [Iraq](#) has placed disproportionate restrictions on the movement of goods into and out of the district of Sinjar, the center for Iraq’s Yezidi religious minority.



Kurdish security forces stop a family from bringing a large bag of rice and a bag of pillows into Sinjar at the Suhaila crossing, currently the only viable entry or exit to Sinjar.

KRG officials say that the KRG is concerned about the activities of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK), an armed Kurdish militant organization that has [forces](#) in Sinjar, mostly made up of Yezidi fighters, and has de facto free movement across the border into Syria. But, just two years after the people of the district were subjected to violent attacks and abuses by the Islamic State (also known as ISIS), blanket KRG restrictions disproportionate to any possible security considerations are causing unnecessary harm to people’s access to food, water, livelihoods, and other fundamental rights.

“After the devastating ISIS attacks on the area and slaughter of the Yezidi population two years ago, the KRG’s restrictions are another serious blow,” said [Lama Fakhri](#), deputy Middle East director at Human Rights Watch. “The KRG should be working to facilitate access to Sinjar for the hundreds of Yezidi civilians wishing to return to their homes, not adding more barriers to their recovery.”

Before August 2014, Sinjar was [home](#) to 360,000 Yazidis. ISIS fighters have [killed](#) between 2,000 and 5,500 Yazidis since August 3, 2014, and abducted an estimated 6,386, according to a recent United Nations [report](#). The ISIS attacks [displaced](#) at least 90 percent of the Yazidi population from Sinjar. Over 180,000 displaced Yazidis are in camps in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). Only a small number of Yazidis have returned.

3. The KRG should be working to facilitate access to Sinjar for the hundreds of Yazidi civilians wishing to return to their homes, not adding more barriers to their recovery.

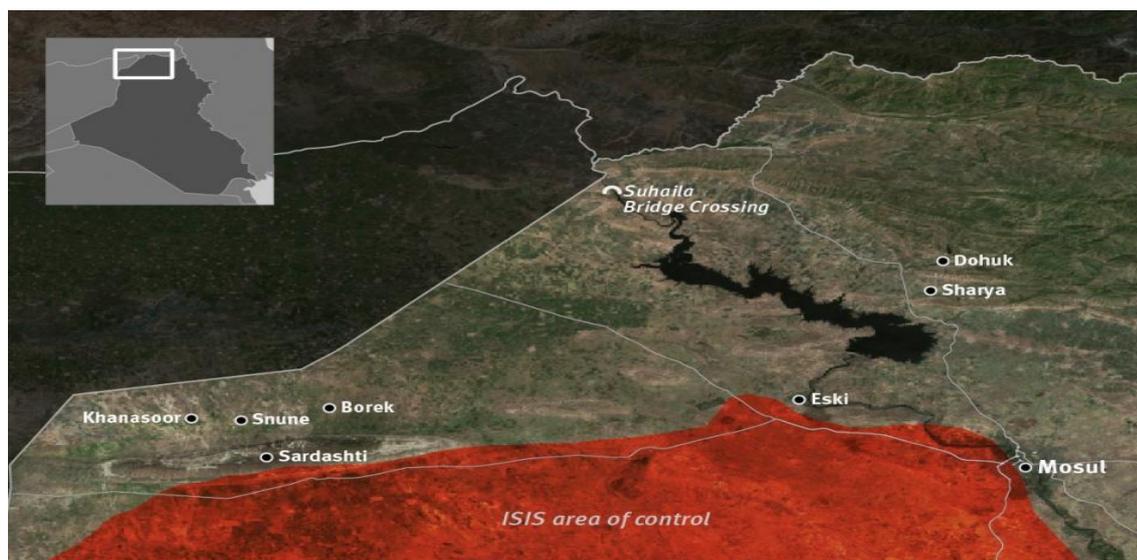
Lama Fakih

Deputy Middle East Director at Human Rights Watch

Sinjar is technically under Iraqi central government administrative control, but KRG security and military forces are present and active within Sinjar. KRG forces control the one main road from Sinjar in to the KRI. ISIS still controls the main roads from Sinjar to other parts of Iraq.

In August 2016, Human Rights Watch visited four camps for internally displaced people in Dohuk, in the KRI, and four towns in northern Sinjar, and interviewed 67 displaced people and local residents. Interviewees included residents who had tried to take produce from their farmland or personal property from their homes out of Sinjar but were restricted from doing so by KRG security forces, and those who had tried to take in food and other supplies to family members who returned to Sinjar and were stopped and returned by KRG forces.

Since the ISIS attack on Sinjar in 2014, the only route out of Sinjar into Iraq not controlled by ISIS is via the Suhaila bridge crossing, two kilometers from the Syrian border, which is controlled by KRG forces. Southern Sinjar is still under ISIS control.



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Though the PKK has had roots in Sinjar for decades, it has dramatically increased its presence there since August 2014. The presence of the PKK, which has heavily recruited among the Yezidi local population in Sinjar to create a local armed branch, the YBŞ, represents a significant security concern for the *Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP)*, one of the governing parties in the KRG, party officials have told *Human Rights Watch*.

While the KRG may take reasonable security measures to screen goods leaving and entering its territory, it should not impose sweeping restrictions that are disproportionate to security considerations, or that unnecessarily harm people’s access to food, water, livelihoods, and other fundamental rights, Human Rights Watch said.

The KRG should publish information publicly stating who is authorized to issue and withdraw restrictions on movement of goods, what restrictions are in place around Sinjar, on what goods, for how long, and for what reasons, with a clear expiration date. It should set out how individuals can address any harm the restrictions cause and compensate those who suffer damage due to an unlawful restriction.

Human Rights Watch interviewed Sinjar residents who stayed in Sinjar during the ISIS attack on the area in August 2014, as well as some who had fled but returned after ISIS was pushed out starting in December 2014. They all said that since August 2014, residents of Sinjar have been suffering from what appeared to be a KRG ban on the movement of all agricultural goods from Sinjar into the KRI. Three farmers from Snune and Khanasoor said KRG forces turn them back when they try to take the wheat and barley they grow into KRG from Sinjar. They said they did not know of any other farmers in Sinjar who had received a permit to bring their goods into the KRI, and Human Rights Watch was not able to identify a single farmer who was able to travel with his goods in any of the areas of Sinjar that researchers visited. Two other families also said that Kurdish forces at the crossing point had stopped them when they tried to drive sheep out of Sinjar.



A car workshop in Snunne, northern Sinjar. The owner can only bring limited stocks of car parts into Sinjar due to the ongoing restrictions imposed by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). He told Human Rights Watch that he now repairs tires that he would have thrown away before 2014.

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Two families in the Dohuk area camps said that KRG forces at Suhaila stopped them when they tried to bring items from their Sinjar homes out with them, even after they said they would get a permit from local Asayish officers confirming their ownership. The forces at Suhaila told them that they would refuse to acknowledge any such permit.

Individuals and groups are also facing restrictions when trying to bring items into Sinjar. Staff from five aid organizations based in the KRI said that since the end of 2014, forces at Suhaila or officials within the Dohuk governorate's office prevented them on at least 10 occasions from bringing food, medical, and other aid items to Sinjar, in some cases despite having permits issued by different KRG officials. Two of the organizations were able to bring in aid once each, because they sent the aid in via a KDP-affiliated charity.

Three families described four incidents since December 2015, in which KRG security officers at Suhaila stopped them from taking foodstuffs and fuel to family members who had moved back to Sinjar. Four businessmen in Snune, the main town in northern Sinjar, said the KRG authorities had denied, delayed, or arbitrarily reduced their requests to import goods into Sinjar. A local shopkeeper said he could barely bring in enough of each item he stocks to last a few days. A cement seller and two car mechanics told Human Rights Watch that they were unable to bring in any goods, while a third mechanic said he was granted permission to bring only a three-day supply of car parts he needed.

While at the Suhaila crossing, Human Rights Watch witnessed KRG security officers pulling over cars and trucks going in both directions and searching them. Human Rights Watch saw officials stop a man coming from Sinjar into KRG territory driving a truck with a sheep in the back and order him to turn back to Sinjar.

At a [meeting](#) on May 14 at the Suhaila crossing, President Masoud Barzani called on the Yezidi community to kick the PKK out of the area. Four members of the Yezidi community working in and around Sinjar and an international diplomat separately told Human Rights Watch that after the meeting they spoke to two leading Yezidi military figures who said that when they asked about the ongoing goods restrictions in Sinjar, a senior KRG official had told them that the restrictions were a punishment for the Yezidis acceptance of the PKK in the area.

The KRG's foreign minister, Falah Mustafa, told Human Rights Watch on August 28 that the governor of Dohuk had full control of efforts to bring items into and out of Sinjar, and justified the

broad restrictions by citing security concerns with the PKK, not with the local population. Before August 2014, local people told Human Rights Watch, there were no restrictions on goods coming in and out of Sinjar.

In a short November 2016 response to a letter Human Rights Watch sent to the KRG in October, Dr. Dindar Zebari, chairperson of the KRG's High Committee to Evaluate and Respond to International Reports, stated that everyone has free movement in and out of the area, including all aid and charity workers to provide needed services. On goods leaving the area, he stated:

Taking objects and possessions out of Sinjar has been restricted because many people's possessions have been looted. This restriction aims to protect their wealth and belongings. Taking objects out of Sinjar is subject to strict security measures in order to determine what they are.

Zebari did not provide any details on the security measures involved. On entry of goods, he wrote: "Regarding the approval to bring in construction materials, such as cement, and livestock, it's limited – it depends on demand and the area's needs." He further said that a security council had been formed within the Sinjar mayor's office to review applications for permission to take items in and that the Dohuk governorate makes the final decisions. He stated that the only goods not allowed entry and exit were those that could serve a "dual purpose," including certain chemicals.

In a meeting on August 18, Fawaz Mirani, Dohuk governorate's head of media and public relations, told Human Rights Watch that the Dohuk authorities have been pushing international aid organizations to provide more services to the people of Sinjar.

However, an aid worker in Dohuk told Human Rights Watch that the Humanitarian Country Team, which includes representatives from the United Nations, *International Organization for Migration*, and other international nongovernmental organizations, has advised aid organizations not to bring aid into the area, saying there is no lifesaving need to do so, and that there is a high chance the aid will be diverted for military means or that the aid groups will become involved in the political competition in the area. Despite this, a few small international and local organizations are providing assistance in the area, though one group told Human Rights Watch it had often been stopped from bringing in aid. In addition, residents of Sinjar told Human Rights Watch that PKK and other armed elements are facilitating goods coming in from Syria.

Kurdish security forces stop and search cars and trucks at Suhaila crossing, currently the only viable entry or exit to Sinjar. “The families we spoke to in Sinjar say they are unable to pursue their traditional livelihoods –



they are barely managing day to day,” Fakhri said. “If these levels of restrictions persist, Sinjar and the Yazidis will find it very difficult to recover.”

Restricted Exports From Sinjar

Three farmers from Snune and Khanasoor told Human Rights Watch they are banned from bringing any agricultural produce from Sinjar to the KRI. All three of them harvested barley this year, after low rainfall led to a lack of water required to irrigate wheat. Two said they were denied permission from the Security Council in Sinjar in June and July to transport the produce through Suhaila crossing. The third farmer said he did not try to export his produce after learning that farmers were being refused. Sinjar residents who interacted with the body said that the Security Council of Sinjar includes the sub-district manager of Sinjar; the local manager of Asayish, a Kurdish security force; the president of the local council; and the local head of police. The residents said that the Asayish play a prominent role in decision-making.

All three men said that as a result of the restrictions, they were forced to find local buyers and sell it for less than a third of what they could have sold it for in Dohuk or elsewhere in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). They said they did not know of any other farmers in Sinjar who had received a permit from the Security Council to bring their goods to the KRI.

Two families told Human Rights Watch that KRG officials at the crossing point had stopped them when they tried to drive sheep out of Sinjar. While at the Suhaila crossing, Human Rights Watch saw officials stop a man driving a truck carrying one sheep and order him to turn back to Sinjar. The man said that the sheep had been intended for his relative’s funeral in Sharya.

All of those prevented from transporting agricultural produce and livestock said that the security officers at the crossing gave them no explanation.

Two families living in the Dohuk area camps said that security officers at Suhaila stopped them when they tried to bring items from their homes when they left Sinjar, including a water tanker, a cabinet, a washing machine, a refrigerator, and blankets. Both families said that officers told them it was to stem

widespread looting in Sinjar while families were displaced. When both families said that they could provide witnesses, and get a permit from local Asayish officers confirming their ownership of the goods in question, the officers refused. Kurdish security forces stop farmer at Suhaila crossing, currently the only viable entry or exit to Sinjar. The farmer wanted to bring a sheep into the Kurdistan Region of Iraq for a family member's funeral. Farmers are prohibited from bringing sheep into the region.

Restricted Entry of Goods into Sinjar

Staff from five aid organizations based in the KRI told Human Rights Watch that since the end of 2014, KRG Peshmerga and Asayish security forces at the Suhaila bridge crossing into Sinjar or the Dohuk governorate's office prevented them on at least 10 occasions from bringing aid items to Sinjar, including printers, paper, notebooks, tents, blankets, shoes, adults' and children's clothes, toys, hygiene and cleaning products, medicine, and foodstuffs, including rice, sugar, tea, flour, vegetable oil, and tomato paste.

Human Rights Watch spoke to a political leader from the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) in charge of aid delivery to populations in need. The KRG, including the Peshmerga, are split between two parties: the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). The KDP is in power in Erbil and Dohuk, two of the KRG's three governorates, while the PUK controls Sulaymaniyah.

The PUK leader told Human Rights Watch that the party's aid branch tried to deliver food, clothes, and toys to Sinjar in February with the KRG health minister's permission. But an official in the Dohuk governor's office refused permission, saying that ministerial permission only covered movement within the region, and there was a chance they would take this aid to the armed Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK), the allied Sinjar Resistance Units (YBS), or across to Syria. The PUK leader said they would be happy to hand all the goods over to the mayor of Sinjar for distribution, but the KRG official refused. In early August, the PUK leader sent in a large delivery of medicine to Sinjar in the name of a KDP-affiliated aid organization and faced no problems. Another of the organizations was able to get one aid delivery in after sending it through a KDP-affiliated charity.

One resident of Sinjar who suffers from chronic headaches told Human Rights Watch said that before August 2014, he used to pay the equivalent of about 20 US cents for 10 paracetamols, or acetaminophen pills. Now the price is 85 cents because of shortages in stocks at pharmacies because of restrictions.

Three families described four incidents since December 2015, in which KRG security officers at Suhaila stopped them from bringing foodstuffs and fuel to family members who had moved back to Sinjar. They had not requested a permit from KRG authorities, the families said, because these items

were for personal consumption. Security officers told them they were forbidden to bring these items in. One of the people said that he and his uncle tried to bring in goods for their family in January but were refused. They tried again in mid-August and were only able to bring in bulgur, rice, hummus, beans, tahini, and olive oil after his uncle bribed security force officers at the crossing.

Businessmen in Snune said that KRG authorities had denied or delayed or arbitrarily reduced their requests to import goods into Sinjar. A local shopkeeper who runs a chain of larger stores currently open in Sinjar said that officers at Suhaila crossing only allowed him to bring in 20 cigarette packets at a time despite a demand for 10 cartons each week, and only allowed him to bring in 15 packets of meat. They allowed him to bring in 50 kilograms of sugar, when he said he needs 300, and only 10 crates of clothes washing powder, as opposed to the 100 crates he said he could sell. He said he needs a special permit to bring in bottled water, a process that can take 20 days and must be issued by a judge. He used to sell up to IQD 10 million (US\$8,583) worth of goods a week, but that has fallen to 1.5 million (\$1,263) because of the shortages of products that KRG authorities disallowed after August 3, 2014.

A cement dealer said that despite having permission from the mayor of Sinjar, local Asayish officers stopped him at Suhaila in January with 15 tons of cement and refused to allow him to bring it in:

I showed them my permission letter but the officers insisted that I go back to Dohuk. They gave no reason why. I went back to the factory where I bought the cement and was able to get my money back for the cement. But I didn't get back the money I had to pay the laborers to load the cement onto the truck at the factory, so all in all I lost 300,000 dinars [\$250].

The same man said that in June, security forces barred him from bringing his own water truck, which he had taken for repairs a few days earlier, back into Sinjar until several Peshmerga commanders intervened on his behalf.

Three mechanics in Snune showed Human Rights Watch their empty auto repair shops – they said they had tried to get permits from the Security Council in Sinjar to bring in car parts.

One mechanic said he had gone to Dohuk seven times seeking permits, spending US\$500 in transportation costs, but was only able to bring items for his business into Sinjar once over a six-month period. On the occasion when he succeeded, the mechanic said, he had sought permission to bring in a shipment of items worth \$2,500, but security forces at Suhaila only allowed him to bring in \$1,300 worth of items, even though he had obtained a permit for the full amount.

On one trip in July, he said he waited at Suhaila for three hours to ask the captain what items are permitted for import into Sinjar. When the captain arrived, he said, "I'll answer you in one word –

nothing.” A second mechanic said he has applied for permits with the Security Council, but they have only granted permission for him to bring in five of each car part he requested, which is enough to last him only three days. At the crossing officers have prevented him from bringing in any motor oil.

While at the Suhaila crossing, Human Rights Watch witnessed KRG security officers pulling over cars and trucks containing personal and commercial items and searching them at the crossing. A shopkeeper who was stopped showed his cargo to Human Rights Watch – about a dozen packets of powdered milk and a dozen of waterpipe tobacco, a TV, and a bag of pillows and blankets. A family was stopped for bringing in a large bag of rice and some pillows.

All of those interviewed said that the security officers at the crossing did not give them any reason for preventing items from coming in.

4. Kurdish Officials Shut Down Group Aiding Yezidis

Closure Comes as Humanitarian Needs in Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan Soar

Belkis Wille, Senior Iraq Researcher, Human Rights Watch, Middle East and North Africa Division

Yesterday, a prominent nongovernmental organization supporting the Yezidi religious minority said it was shut down by security officers from the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG).

The organization, called Yazda, is located in the city of Dohuk in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Three KRG officers came to the offices and told staff the organization was now “closed.” Although Kurdish authorities [claimed they closed down](#) Yazda after warning it to abide by KRG rules governing NGOs, Yazda staff said that they received no such warning. Rather, they said officers provided no reason, no paperwork, and no information on how long it was being closed. The officers put locks on the doors to prevent staff from coming back. One person close to the organization told me he suspected that the decision stemmed from Yazda’s plan to support at least 3,000 families in Sinjar with livelihood materials, as part of a larger United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) project. Sinjar is an important Yezidi area that was overrun by the Islamic State, also known as ISIS, in August 2014. In December, Human Rights Watch issued a report on the [KRG’s severe restrictions on goods](#), such as food, fuel, and car parts in and out of Sinjar. The UNDP project directly challenges that policy. When we wrote the report, the KRG said it was concerned about aid ending up with an armed Kurdish group, the Kurdistan Workers’ Party, with forces in Sinjar.

Yet the KRG’s decision to shut down an NGO – for unspecified reasons and at a time of growing humanitarian need – has quickly sent a shudder through Iraq’s humanitarian community. The Iraqi government’s operation to retake Mosul from ISIS will soon enter its third month. The number of

people displaced by the fighting is [approaching 130,000](#), and the many camps housing these families are reaching capacity. Humanitarian organizations are struggling to meet the needs.

Yazda has been providing vital assistance, including psychosocial support, to the Yezidi community in northern Iraq, which was the target of ISIS atrocities. Yazda has advocated for Yezidi victims by encouraging more international support for assistance and by supporting the work of the UN Goodwill Ambassador for the dignity of survivors of human trafficking, Nadia Murad, a Yezidi woman abducted by ISIS.

UN officials told me they believe hundreds of Yezidi women and men are being [held by ISIS in Mosul](#). When they escape to safety it is crucial that organizations are in place to provide them with support. Right now, the support Yazda provided to hundreds of women and children abused by ISIS has been halted and the thousands of families in Sinjar waiting for support to restart their lives are in limbo. The desperate situation faced by traumatized communities in Iraq shows we need more organizations like Yazda, supporting populations as they reintegrate and recover from ISIS abuses. The KRG authorities need to think hard about the consequences of Yazda's closure and reverse its decision in accordance with its international obligations to facilitate, not obstruct, humanitarian assistance.