

Iraqi Christians Prepare to Defend Against Islamic State Attacks

Sons of Liberty International (SOLI), a company founded to provide free military consulting, training and supplies to communities threatened by terrorism, has completed a week of leadership training of the Nineveh Plain Protection Units (NPU), a group of Iraqi Christians trying to defend themselves against ISIS.

Since December 2014, SOLI has advised and trained the NPU for free. The NPU recently asked SOLI to provide training in numerous military disciplines, beginning with leadership training for sergeants and officers.

SOLI originally planned to provide an additional week of leadership training, as requested by the NPU, but this is no longer possible due to the lack of a training facility. Matthew VanDyke, founder of SOLI, was told by the NPU that one of SOLI's rivals, the American Mesopotamian Organization (AMO), pressured the Assyrian Democratic Movement (ADM), a political party in Iraq that formed the NPU, into denying further access to their Dohuk headquarters, where the leadership training took place.

"We congratulate the NPU soldiers in the leadership course for their achievement," VanDyke said. "These courageous men worked hard and were really looking forward to completing an additional week of training, which included very important medical training that saves lives. They're devastated that their training had to be shortened due to decisions made by ADM under pressure from AMO."

VanDyke urged cooperation among groups trying to help Christians in the Middle East defend themselves against ISIS.

“AMO has repeatedly interfered with SOLI’s ability to deliver free training and supplies in an effort to preserve their influence over the NPU,” he said. “Unfortunately, ADM has allowed the influence of AMO to take precedence over protecting their people. The result is that SOLI cannot provide the NPU with additional free training or resources, such as body armor, medical supplies and vehicles, at this time.

“Denying the NPU access to a training program before they are deployed against ISIS is unconscionable. It will likely result in the death of NPU soldiers. In all my years working in the Middle East, I have never seen anything like this.”

Gevara Zaya of the NPU Leadership Committee, who has worked with VanDyke on all three SOLI training programs, thanked SOLI for its “excellent training.”

“It is regrettable that we have not been able to secure a location for additional leadership training at this time, but we hope for more training from SOLI in the future,” Zaya said.

SOLI has met with other Christian forces in Iraq and will now look to work with one or more of these forces in the interim. SOLI has maintained a strong working relationship with the NPU leadership in Iraq for several months and remains open to working with them in the future.

“SOLI looks forward to its next mission to support the Christian community of Iraq in their fight against ISIS,” VanDyke said.

SOLI was founded to help communities protect themselves from terrorist and insurgent groups. SOLI does not charge those in need for its services and operates solely on generous support from individuals.