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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 1, 2018

***EPIC RECEIVES USAID AWARD TO AID DISPLACED FAMILIES IN IRAQ
Veteran-led Charity Will Help Communities in Ninewa Province Recover from War***

WASHINGTON, DC – The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has awarded the Education for Peace in Iraq Center (EPIC) a two-year \$500,000 contract to support the safe and voluntary return of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) to their homes in the Ninewa Plains and Western Ninewa areas of northern Iraq. The agreement is part of a Broad Agency Announcement and will be carried out in partnership with Heartland Alliance International, a leading anti-poverty and social justice organization with more than 125 years of experience in global human rights.

“This contract award will allow our team of researchers to identify individual-level threats, incidents of discrimination, and other community-identified risks to communities displaced by ISIS and hoping to go home,” said EPIC Executive Director Erik Gustafson. “For its part, EPIC will conduct surveys on issues related to perceived safety and community trust, train community representatives to monitor and map conditions and vulnerabilities, and develop messaging campaigns that supports the restoration of Ninewa’s ethnic, religious and cultural diversity.”

According to USAID, Iraq has experienced substantial political, economic, and social turmoil as a result of the protracted conflict with the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) that erupted in summer 2014. With the recapture of territories held by ISIS and a decrease in violence, approximately 2.2 million Iraqis have returned home while another 3 million remain displaced. Many of these IDPs are minorities, including individuals and families from Christian, Yazidi, Assyrian, Turkmen, Shabak, and mixed-minority towns in the Ninewa Plains and Western Ninewa.

Matthew Schweitzer, an EPIC researcher, said that “Minority families in Ninewa were particularly targeted by ISIS brutality and face unique challenges in the post-conflict period. Our job is to identify those challenges and work collaboratively to develop the solutions that will make it safe for them to return home and thrive for generations to come.”

The Education for Peace in Iraq Center (EPIC) works one-on-one with civil society leaders in Iraq to provide relief to vulnerable populations, monitor the crisis to better inform public policy, and enhance understanding of Iraq’s story. EPIC was founded in 1998 by U.S. Army veterans of the Gulf War who believe that a human security approach can make Iraq safe and prosperous again.

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*The Education for Peace in Iraq Center is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization.
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