To: Unicode Technical Committee

From: Ardwan Al-Sabti, Graphic Designer specialized in Mandaic art and typography

Subject: The Non-Joining U+0858 in the Mandaic Unicode Standard

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The Non-Joining U+0858 in the Mandaic Unicode Standard

1 Introduction. The modern wars of the middle east, have lead the Mandaean community into diaspora. Remarkably, they still want to continue practicing their ancient Mandaic language in our modern days. However, this could not be the case without Unicode introducing the Mandaic script block in 2010.

This Mandaic block is based on the M. Everson proposal from 2008, which unfortunately includes a few essential errors that need to be fixed. For this reason an improvement must be done to the current Mandaic Unicode block by starting with the appearing errors in the Unicode standard.

2 Non Joining Characters. According to Everson's proposal there are five Right-Joining and three Non-Joining characters in the Mandaic character set, which are shown (in table 1) below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Right-joining Mandaic Characters</th>
<th>Character</th>
<th>X_n</th>
<th>X_r</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HALQA</td>
<td>ڝ</td>
<td>ڕ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AZ</td>
<td>ڝ</td>
<td>ڕ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IN</td>
<td>ڝ</td>
<td>ڕ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AKSA</td>
<td>ڝ</td>
<td>ڕ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASH</td>
<td>ڝ</td>
<td>ڕ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-joining Mandaic Characters</th>
<th>Character</th>
<th>X_n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DUSHENNA</td>
<td>ڝ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KAD</td>
<td>ڝ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIN</td>
<td>ڝ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: "Proposal for encoding the Mandaic script in the BMP of the UCS" by M. Everson, 2008, p.2
Following the process through the suggestion of R. Pournader's "Joining types for Mandaic" (L2/10-413) and the current list of joining properties at the web (table 2), it can be concluded, that Unicode decided to have character U+0858 as a Non-Joining Mandaic character.

3 Right-Joining behaviour. In the following pages Mandaic manuscripts are presented to dissaprove the choice for the Non-Joining U+0858 in the Mandaic block. The manuscripts provide clear evidence which indicate the Right-Joining behaviour of this character in the Mandaic script.
U+0858

The letter "Ain" is a borrowed letter from the Arabic script. The Mandaeans decided to include the isolated shape of the Arabic "Ain" to write their names when those include a foreign "Ain" sound. However, Mandaeans chose to use this "isolated Arabic Ain" in two joining possibilities: as a **Non-Joining** and a **Right-Joining** character.

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**Figure 1** [RRC5D: 1890]

On the left: L (U+084B) + R-Joining Ain (U+0858) = نع
On the right: Non-Joining Ain (U+0858) = نع

**Figure 2** [RRC6I: 1897] U (U+0845) + R-Joining Ain (U+0858) = نع

**Figure 3** [RRC4J-1: 1950]

On the left: T (U+0855) + R-Joining Ain (U+0858) = نع
On the right: Non-Joining Ain (U+0858) = نع
However, Mr. Everson has introduced in his Mandaic proposal (figure 8) one unconsequent example of a private letter which shows an unconnected middle Ain:

![Figure 4 [Letter to Lady Drower]](image)

On the left: \( L (U+084B) + R\text{-Joining Ain (U+0858)} = \xi \)

On the right: Non-Joining Ain (U+0858) = \( \xi \)

### 4 Conclusion

The Mandaic letter Ain may join to other letters from the Right side. For this reason the Unicode Technical Committee must correct the joining properties of this discussed character by changing the setting of the joining properties from U(njoining) to **R(right-Joining)**. Please see the correction in (table 3):

| 0858; MANDAIC AIN; R; No_Joining_Group |

In cases when a Right-Joining letter is typed in front of the U+0858, it becomes a Non-Joining Character and then ZWNJ should be used.

### 5 Acknowledgements

**Fonts**

The Mandaic text in this proposal was set in the font *Ardwan Manuscript.*

The Latin text in this proposal was set in the font *Times New Roman.*
6 References

Photographic evidence
All the photographic sources from the [RRC]: Rbai Rafid Collection are reproduced by kind permission of the custodian of the collection.

Figure 1  1890  Manuscript RRC 5D "ʿniania ḍ-ṃaḥbuta" by Bihram br Zihrun
Figure 2  1897  Manuscript RRC 6I "Ginza Rba" by Iahia br Mhatam Iuhan
Figure 3  1950  Manuscript RRC 4J-1 "Sidra ḍ-Nīšmata" by Adam Zihrun br Sam
Figure 4  1940s  Private letter to Lady Drower by Sheikh Kmat

Bibliography
Everson, M.  2008  Proposal for encoding the Mandaic script in the BMP of the UCS
Pournader, R.  2010  Joining types for Mandaic
Unicode  2019  List of joining properties
https://www.unicode.org/Public/UCD/latest/ucd/ArabicShaping.txt