



## **Yezidi & Christian Genocide by ISIS in Iraq and Syria and the Refugee Crisis**

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

Mr. Chairman and committee members, I am honoured to be here. Thank you for this opportunity to speak at this hearing on “Genocide by ISIS and the Refugee Crisis,” I also want to thank the Holocaust Memorial Museum for its recent report asserting that the Yezidis are indeed the victims of genocide. The Chaldo-Assyrian Christian should have been included in the report. Our loss may not be the same, but the ISIS brutal actions against both of us are the same.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am here today to speak of preventing the annihilation by ISIS of my people, the Yezidis, and of the Chaldo-Assyrian Christians in Iraq and Syria.

We Yezidis are desperate for your immediate help and support. During our six thousand year history, Yezidis have faced 74 genocides in the Middle East, including the ongoing genocide. Why? Simply because we are not Muslims. We are an ancient and proud people from the heart of Mesopotamia, the birth place of civilization and the birth place of many of the world’s religions. And here we are today, in 2015, on the verge of annihilation. In response to our suffering, around the World there is profound, obscene silence. We Yezidis are considered “Infidels” in the eyes of Muslims, and so they are encouraged to kill, rape, enslave, and convert us.

On August 02, 2014, on the eve of ISIS’ attack on the Yezidis in Sinjar region, more than 10,000 of the local authority’s forces were present in Sinjar region, allegedly there to protect the Yezidis. In the early hours of the evening, the Yezidis tried desperately to flee for their lives to Mount Sinjar, but the local militia would not allow it. At about 10 pm, these same local forces -- who had promised to defend us, began to withdraw from Yezidis’ villages of the Southern side of Mount Sinjar without notifying the Yezidis. They escaped back to the KRG region. Yezidi men begged the local forces for weapons and ammo so that we could defend ourselves from ISIS. But they refused. They would not spare even one weapon, not one round of ammo to the Yezidi men, women, and children whom they, the local militia, had trapped in what was a waiting room for death and carnage at the hands of ISIS. And several Yezidis who begged and pleaded for weapons to save themselves and their People were killed like dogs by peshmergas. And so, God help us, on August 03, 2014 at 2:00 am, ISIS entered Sinjar region. The stage was set for a massacre of our People, for we possessed only very basic weapons, such as AK 47 rifles. Yezidi women, children, the elderly and empty-handed adults, with no means of self-defence at all -- tried to escape the barbarians and flee to Mount Sinjar. It did not take long – only four or five hours it took – for the poorly armed Yezidi fighters to run out of ammo and the region was overrun with death, and ISIS took over Sinjar region. With no means of defense, of course the carnage was immense: Thousands of men were killed on the spot, including the beheading of hundreds. The UN estimates that 5000 Yezidis were murdered and thousands of women and children taken hostage.

Then, on August 6, 2014, ISIS attacked the Yezidis and the Chaldo-Assyrians Christians in Nineveh Plain. The resulting Genocide took the lives of hundreds of thousands of Yezidis, Chaldo-Assyrians, and Shia minority refugees. ISIS has wiped from existence are of the most culturally diverse areas in

the Middle East. Today, hundreds of thousands who are still alive have taken refuge in IDP camps across the Iraqi Kurdish Region and some (Shiaa) in the Southern Iraq. They urgently require your help.

There are thousands of young Yezidi women, girls and even children, who as I speak have been enslaved and forced into sexual slavery. These girls are subjected to daily, multiple rapes by ISIS monsters. According to many escaped women and girls whom I talked to in Northern Iraq, the abducted Yezidis, mostly women and children, number over 7,000. Some of those women and girls have had to watch 7, 8 and 9 year old children bleed to death before their eyes, after being raped by ISIS militia multiple times a day.

I met mothers, whose children were torn from them by ISIS. These same mothers came to plead for the return of their children, only to be informed, that they – the mothers! – had been fed the flesh of their own children by ISIS, children murdered, then fed to their own mothers! ISIS militia have burned alive many Yezidi and Christian girls for refusing to convert and marry ISIS men. Young Yezidi boys are being trained to be jihadists and suicide bombers. The entire Yezidi population was displaced in less than one day on August 03, 2014! The Yezidis and Chaldo-Assyrians Christians face this genocide together. Why? Because we are not Muslims, and because our path is the path of peace. For this, we are being burned alive. For living as men and women of peace.

What I have just recounted to you, what has happened to the Yezidis and Chaldo-Assyrian Christians in Sinjar and in Nineveh Plain is nothing less than genocide – according to the UN definition of genocide!

### **IDPs and Refugee Crisis in Iraq, Syria and Turkey**

Humanitarian aid, while necessary, is not sufficient. Much humanitarian aid distributed by the Kurdish Regional authorities and the Iraqi government never gets into the hands of those who need it, those for whom it was intended -- due to skimming, corruption, and politics. Some outside observers say that as much as 90 percent of the humanitarian assistance meant for Yezidis and other minorities has never reached their hands.

There are more than 40,000 Yezidi refugees currently languishing in Turkey and Syria. At the top of the threatened and persecuted list are the Yezidis, then come the Chaldo-Assyrian Christians. Five thousand Yazidis were murdered by ISIS in August of 2014 and 7,000 are enslaved, mostly young women and children. Thousands fled to camps where they are abused by the Muslim authorities in charge, denied food and medicine. Or they can't get into UN refugee camps at all and, consequently, are not certified as refugees since one cannot get refugee status without being certified and the Muslims who dominate the camps do not want them there.

The same holds true for Chaldo-Assyrian Christians who have repeatedly been forced to renounce their religion or die. Enslavement, rape; more than 400 of their churches have been desecrated and destroyed.

If humanitarianism is the chief reason being cited in accepting refugees, the Yezidis and other minority groups should receive priority simply because they are among the most persecuted in the Middle East and the ones who have nowhere else to go.

Perhaps the worst camps for Yezidis are those that border Syria, because of the fighting between the PKK, Syrian Kurds, and the Turkish government. Yezidis here worry about the Russian plane recently downed by Turkey. In the event of war between the two countries, Yezidis refugees are afraid of being used as "human shields." Because of the unsafe situation, hundreds of these Yezidis are fleeing for

Europe. They are seeking safety and a peaceful life, and yet hundreds of these refugees have perished on the journey, whether in truck trailers, or by drowning in their tube boats in the sea between Turkey and Greece. Others die of starvation and dehydration, attempting to reach safety by foot. In all cases their desperation is the cause of death.

I am pleading with each and every one of you in the name of humanity to lend us your support at this crucial time to save the indigenous and peaceful peoples of the Middle East --Yezidis and Chaldo-Assyrian Christians.

## Our urgent demands

1. Recognize the Yezidi and Chaldo-Assyrian Christian genocide and provide international protection, so we can live as God created us.
2. Concerned nations, including the U.S., Canada, U. K., NATO and EU member states, and the United Nations should make a concerted effort to liberate ISIS detention centers. As mentioned, we estimate at least 4,000 are currently held young Yezidi women, girls and children by ISIS.
3. We ask the United Nations, US, Canada, UK, EU, NATO and other members of the international community to intervene with the Iraqi Government, supporting the creation of an “Autonomous Region” for the Yezidis, Chaldo-Assyrians, and other minorities in the Sinjar region and Nineveh Plain under the protection of international forces and directly tied to Baghdad's Central government. This right is guaranteed under the Iraqi constitution, article 125, but it needs implementation! This is the only way we can survive in the Middle East.
4. We ask the US and all sympathetic governments around the world to develop refugee policies that can work quickly and effectively to provide new homes for needy refugees, for the Yezidis, Chaldo-Assyrians and others who urgently need a new beginning, especially the abducted who were able to escape from ISIS far from the carnage we have witnessed. Germany has agreed to accept 1000 Yezidis refugees, who were abducted by ISIS and **Seven hundred** have arrived already.
5. Humanitarian aid must be sent immediately to those internally displaced in Northern Iraq. There is an imminent threat of starvation, dehydration and disease, especially for the Yezidis on Mount Sinjar. As much as possible, this assistance should come from neutral, non-governmental sources to mitigate diversion of food and water.

Thank you for listening, and for your very careful consideration going forward. We beseech you with the greatest urgency to help save the remnants of our Yezidi nation, of the Chaldo-Assyrians, and other minorities. Only with your help, after we have experienced so much death, and suffering, is there the possibility of a peaceful life going forward for our People.

Best regards,

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