



Genocide Alert: Yazidis in Iraq

The Yazidi people are a Kurdish-speaking minority in northern Iraq and Syria. Throughout their history, Yazidis claim to have experienced [73 genocides](#).

During Saddam Hussein's Anfal genocide of the 1980's, Yazidis, Kurds, and Assyrians were subjected to forced "[Arabization](#)," deportation, destruction of settlements and cultural heritage, chemical warfare, and genocide. They were also victims of [gendercide](#) due to mass executions of their male populations. The Anfal genocide resulted in the deaths of [180,000 people](#) and the destruction of [ninety percent](#) of Kurdish villages.

Genocide of Yazidis by the Islamic State (ISIS or Da'esh) occurred in 2014 in Sinjar, northern Iraq. ISIS branded Yazidis heretics, infidels, and "devil-worshippers," because of parallels between Quranic descriptions of the devil and the Yazidis' reverence for the peacock angel, Tawusi Melek.

UN investigators estimate that since 2014, over [5,000 Yazidi civilians have been massacred](#), [7,000 have been kidnapped and sold into sexual slavery](#), and more than [500,000 now live as refugees](#). [Entire male populations of individual villages](#) were rounded up and executed. Mass graves continue to be exhumed. Forced abortions and rapes were used as weapons of war. ISIS even published a [pamphlet](#) for ISIS fighters that justified the rape of Yazidi girls as young as 12.

Six years after the 2014 ISIS genocide, [3,000](#) abducted Yazidi women and girls remain missing. Many continue to live as slaves. Though Yazidi leaders have declared that women and girls rescued from slavery will be respected, Yazidis do not accept children born from ISIS rapes, a [policy](#) that forces women to choose between returning home and keeping their children. [Suicide rates](#) among women formerly held in captivity are high. Anti-suicide programs have not been supported by local and international donors.

According to the UN, of the [100,000](#) Yazidis who have returned to Sinjar since 2015, nearly all lack access to critical services such as healthcare, education, and psychological support. Family units have been severely damaged, because many Yazidi men were executed during the genocide.

[Forced by ISIS to convert and change their names and language](#), many rescued children [have forgotten their Yazidi identities](#), slowing reintegration. This situation is the result of violation of Article 2e of the Genocide Convention: "forcibly transferring children of the group to another group." It is a continuation of the ISIS genocide against the Yazidis.

Genocide Watch recognizes the Islamic State's intentional destruction of the Yazidi ethnic and religious group as Genocide. In Genocide Watch's Ten Stages of Genocide, it is Stage 9: Extermination. Though many countries, including the United States, have declared that ISIS committed genocide against the Yazidis, international failure to support secure Yazidi resettlement constitutes a form of Stage 10: Denial.

Genocide Watch recommends:

- Investment by the US, EU, and UN in resettlement, development, and psychological support for Yazidi refugees and survivors.
- Adoption of a more active NGO role in resolution of Sinjar's local governance issues.
- Recruitment and training of Yazidis into Iraq's official security forces and greater representation of Yazidis in Iraq's government.
- Prosecution of Islamic State combatants in a Special Tribunal for Iraq and Syria for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide.