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The Question of the Yazidis



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Introduction

Atop Mount Sinjar the Yazidi people still remain in fear of ISIS. The Yazidis are a Kurdish speaking ethnic group that primarily live in Northern Iraq. They are said to have originated from Syria, and later migrated to Iraqi Kurdistan. They practice a religion also known as Yazidism. This is one of the oldest and smallest religions, but is one of the most ancient forms. The religion draws multiple beliefs mainly from: Islam, Christianity and Judaism, and this is exactly where the conflict begins. Over centuries the Yazidi people have endured multiple persecutions from the likes of the Mongols to the Ottomans, now ISIS is on the hunt for them.

There are approximately 800,000 Yazidi people in the world, 600,000 of which have fled to the Sinjar Mountains, in Northern Iraq. The conditions there are extremely hostile; reaching up to 50°C many have already died of dehydration. It leaves the Yazidi people with three choices: die at the hands of ISIS, die of dehydration and starvation or join ISIS forces.

The main reason for this vendetta against the Yazidi people lies in the roots of their religion. And this is really a major case of exploitation of an ethnic group, because there is a lack of religious diversity. Thus, after suffering for centuries, the Yazidi people have yet not been fully accepted into many cultures.

At this point in time, the situation for the Yazidi still remains sceptical. ISIS continue to pressure and slaughter, and the Yazidis have no way to go. Aid and resources are being airdropped by the US, UK and Australia in an attempt to help and support the Yazidi people. ISIS still have total control of the surrounding area, but forces are making an attempt to break through, and allow the Yazidis to flee.



Definition of Key Terms

Yazidis

The Yazidis are an ethnically Kurdish religious group, that primarily live in Northern Iraq; Yazidism is the religion that the Yazidi people practice. The majority of the Yazidi population currently resides atop Mount Sinjar, where they have fled from ISIS' slaughter. This ethnic minority is being oppressed and have been continuously oppressed in the past because of their religion.

ISIS

ISIS (Islamic State in Iraq and Syria) is an extremist, Jihadist terrorist group. That preaches Sharia law and establishes a Sunni Islamic state.

Religious diversity

Religious diversity is the goal in which all religions and beliefs co-existing in one society

Religious Minority

Religious minority refers to a racial, ethnic or religious division of society, that is underrepresented compared to the dominant group in terms of political and financial power.

Genocide

The deliberate killing of a large number of people, often targeted due to ethnicity and race. Having already experienced genocide (in the Armenian genocide) the Yazidis now face a genocide from ISIS.

Unlawful Killing

A violation to international law, unlawful killing is the killing of someone or a group of people by a person or a group of people done without lawful excuse, and thus breaching criminal law.

Deliberate Targeting of civilians

A violation to international law, deliberate targeting of civilians, also known as distinction, refers to the distinction between civilians and combatants. It is considered a crime when civilians are intentionally killed.



General Overview

Historical events

Ottoman era

In 1640, Yazidi communities were attacked by 40,000 Ottoman soldiers, around Mount Sinjar in Iraq. 300 villages were burned, killing 1000-2000 Yazidis. Furthermore 3,060 Yazidi people were killed while these soldiers raided the city, leaving a total of around 5,060 Yazidis dead. Furthermore in 1892, the Ottoman Empire declared a campaign to mass murder Yazidis and all other religious minorities, in order to Islamize the Ottoman Empire.

Armenian Genocide

The Armenian Genocide was the Ottoman's extermination of approximately 1.5 Million Armenians. This occurred on 24th April 1915, where the Ottoman government subjected the Armenian minorities to deportation and mass murder. They were deported to the city of Ankara in Turkey or the Syrian deserts, where most were massacred. Of these minorities the Yazidis were hugely massacred. In the 19th century the Yazidis had arrived at the Russian Empire (Now Armenia and Georgia), as they were experiencing oppression by the Ottomans and the Sunni Kurds. Thus, in the early 20th century, the Armenian genocide dealt a massive blow to the Yazidi population.

Karabakh Conflict

In 1988 Yazidis in Armenia challenged the government in the hopes of gaining recognition of their identity. Thus in 1989 the USSR presented the Yazidis, and there were a recorded 52,700 Yazidis in Armenia. However, there were even more deaths of the Yazidi people, as they voluntarily fought during the Karabakh conflict, alongside the Armenians.

Post 2003

In 2007, ISIS hijacked a local bus in the city of Mosul, Iraq. The terrorists removed everyone apart from the Yazidis. The remaining 23 Yazidi people were driven elsewhere and murdered. Later in the year two Yazidi communities were rigged with vehicle bombs carrying two tons of explosives. This left 500 Yazidi people dead and 1500 injured. ISIS is continuing this mass genocide of the Yazidi people. This has



been going on for almost two years now. Forcing thousands of them to flee into the hostile Sinjar Mountains, and abducting women, as trophies. Women and girls were used for sexual slavery and sold in slave markets. Boys were



indoctrinated and trained to become soldiers for ISIS. It is reported that ISIS is holding around 3,200 Yazidi women and children. Meanwhile the Yazidis that had the opportunity to flee, are being subjected to the hostile conditions in northern Iraq, and due to their lack of resources, are dying of dehydration and malnutrition.

Religion

The main reason for this vendetta against the Yazidi people lies in the roots of their religion. They worship a god whose name in Arabic translates to “the devil,” and thus many Muslims believe that the Yazidis are Devil worshippers. This is why the Islamic State, the Sunni jihadist terrorist group (ISIS) are looking to slaughter all Yazidis, or give them the option to convert to Islam. In the past, as can be seen, the situation was very similar. For the Ottomans, they were similarly trying to islamify their rule, and thus exterminated any other religion or ethnic group in their path. This is also exactly what occurred in the Armenian Genocide, except on a much larger scale, being the second largest genocide in mankind.

Major countries and organizations involved

USA (United States of America)

As soon as ISIS’ persecution of the Yazidi people came to surface, the USA launched airstrikes on ISIS. The USA have given millions of dollars’ worth of military equipment to fighters opposing ISIS, furthermore they have sent nearly \$548 million in humanitarian aid to Iraq and Syria. It has also conducted more than 800 airstrikes against ISIS and deployed

over 3,000 US troops. Most importantly they have also been the key members in the coalition against ISIS.

Iraq

Seeing as Iraq currently has the most number of Yazidi people in the world, we would suppose that it should also contribute to this genocide of an ethnic minority. The issue has been brought up in parliament, and thus Iraq should be planning a method in which to do so. However, nothing has been done since the debate in parliament.

UK (United Kingdom)

When news arrived that ISIS was persecuting a religious minority named the Yazidis near mount Sinjar. The United Kingdom sent emergency aid to the areas in which they were seeking refuge. Furthermore they sent the Kurdish troops more weapons to help defend the Yazidi people.

Australia

When news arrived that ISIS was persecuting a religious minority named the Yazidis near mount Sinjar, Australia sent emergency aid to the areas in which they were seeking refuge. Furthermore they sent the Kurdish troops more weapons to help defend the Yazidi people.

Armenia

Although Armenia doesn't play much of a role in the current issue, they could be a possible solution. In the past Armenia had significant number of Yazidis in their country, however, there was a demographic shift to Iraq. Therefore Armenia could offer a helping hand, to the Yazidi people, once again, and allow them to take refuge in Armenia.

ISIS

ISIS is clearly a huge player in this major issue. ISIS is a relatively new terrorist organization, however they are now known as one of the deadliest on the planet. Due to a huge number of followers and large financial input, ISIS is a huge force to reckon with. When ISIS released videos of Yazidi people being massacred, it triggered other nations, to respond and take action. However ISIS are determined to complete their job; to exterminate the Yazidi people. Only due to differing religious beliefs and misconceptions, ISIS is determined to put an end to this ethnic group in their territory.



Timeline Of events

Date	Description of the event
1940	Armenian Genocide
2007	523 Yazidis die from terrorist attack, most likely at the hands of ISIS or Al-Qaeda
2014, June 21	ISIS orders all Yazidi people to stop working in the city of Mosul
2014, August 2	ISIS captures and kills 2000 Yazidis, causing 200,00 to flee
2014, August 4	Yazidi, Iraqi member of parliament calls out for help for the Yazidi people.
2014, August 14	Kurdish fighters train Yazidis to fight ISIS
2014, September 6	ISIS capture and hold Yazidi families in Mosul, selling women as sex-slaves
2014, September 16	US conduct an airstrike on ISIS in Northern Iraq
2015	ISIS destroy several ancient Yazidi towns and villages.
Present day	The Yazidi people are being harshly oppressed by ISIS. ISIS intends to exterminate them, or force them to convert to Islam.

UN involvement, Relevant Resolutions

Unfortunately there hasn't been a lot of activity to prevent these drastic measures being forced upon the Yazidi people.

Drastic measures must be taken to stop the situation for the Yazidi people, even though there have not been a lot of activity, there have been a few resolutions looking to tackle problems of religious diversity as well as combatting ISIS.

Here are some resolutions that the UN have debated, most are in regards to the genocide, others in an attempt to stop ISIS itself:

- *European Parliament resolution of 4 February 2016 on the systematic mass murder of religious minorities by the so-called 'ISIS/Daesh' (2016/2529(RSP))*



- *European Parliament resolution on the systematic mass murder of religious minorities by ISIS, 27th January 2016, (2016/2529(RSP))*
- *Condemning Gross, Widespread Abuse of Human Rights by Extremist Groups in Iraq and Syria, 15 August 2014, (S/RES/2170)*
- *Condemns ISIL Terrorist attacks, 20 November 2015, (S/RES/2249)*

Previous attempts to solve the issue

There is a lot of involvement in an attempt to stop ISIS. There are twelve countries that have launched airstrikes against ISIS in Iraq and Syria. Furthermore 30 more countries have provided aid, in terms of military and military training. These countries are also being helped by rebel groups such as (Iraqi Kurds, and the Islamic Front), and depleting ISIS resources.

The United Nations, through several resolutions have condemned ISIS and it's allies. They have asked member states to do their best to contain ISIS, successfully relocate the approximate 4 million refugees. Furthermore the UN Security Council are planning on authorizing military action against ISIS, as many nations have deployed armed forces however none are have shown the intent to destroy ISIS.

However it must be noted that there isn't much action being taken against this genocide of the Yazidis. The USA are considering to take military action in and around the area, to help free the Yazidi people from their imminent death at the hands of ISIS. Vian Dakhil, a Yazidi member of the Iraqi parliament called out to the government and international communities about the issue, and she called out to everyone to help 'save' the Yazidi people. There is also a Non-Profit Organization (NPO) called Yazda; their sole mission is to help the Yazidi people and support them after ISIS' genocidal campaign. This is done by providing aid, education and healthcare to them.

Possible Solutions

It is clear that we all need to make a contribution to prevent this exploitation of the Yazidi people. To do this we would need to stop the major force, that is ISIS. Due to the extremely complicated issue, the solutions are quite minimal.

What needs to be the primary focus is to stop ISIS, at its source. There needs to be further prevention of radical and terrorist groups and to ensure that these groups are not exploiting a certain ethnicity. The use of violence seems like the only possible solution for us to stop ISIS. However, ISIS has too much power in their region for any military to have much affect, thus



this issue must be solved from 'within', perhaps without the use of violence. There needs to be an agreement, a state of equilibrium in the region(s), a government to represent the interests of the people, someone with power, authority and charisma.

Stopping ISIS by the use of violence is a last resort option. It may seem like a simple task, with a few nuclear bombs heading ISIS' way, however no one wants innocent civilians to die in the process. War would lead to many loses of lives and not only that, it would take years to completely eliminate ISIS from the face of the earth, due to the extent of their coverage. It will require the world's armies to come together, bring their resources and fight in unity against ISIS.

Another very important point is to increase religious diversity as different cultures can come to learn, understand and accept differences, rather than them being exploited. This is also another step for nations to prevent future organizations to exploit ethnic groups such as the Yazidi people. Work like the Yazda organization group would also greatly benefit the individuals of society. Supporting the victims of this genocide and educating this society, to help ensure such genocides don't occur again in the future. The involvement of more Non-Governmental Organizations and United Nations Organizations, would greatly benefit the Yazidi community, and will hopefully lead to them being freed and end their oppression.

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