

The Yazidis' wound is still bleeding: First the Islamic State, now Turkey

by Gokcan Aydogan - 26/01/2018 11:20



The Yazidi community in Syria has been targeted since the beginning of the Syrian Civil War in 2011 because of its identity and many Yazidis have suffered forced displacement.

Sinjar was home to around 400,000 followers of the ancient Yazidi religion before it was stormed by fighters with the Islamic State (IS) in August 2014.

IS systematically murdered Yazidi men and elderly residents, and captured and enslaved women and children. About 3,100 Yazidis were killed - with more than half shot, beheaded or burned alive - and about 6,800 kidnapped to become sex slaves or fighters, according to a report published in the Public Library of Science journal PLoS Medicine.

Sinjar was destroyed. IS' actions against the Yazidi population have resulted in approximately 500,000 refugees and several thousand killed and kidnapped.

50,000 Yazidis, besieged by IS on Mount Sinjar, were able to escape after Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) broke the IS siege on the mountains. Majority of them were rescued by YPG fighters. The multinational rescue operation involved dropping off supplies on the mountains by the US, UK, and Australia and evacuation of some refugees by helicopters.

Today, the security and safety of Yazidi citizens in 21 villages in the vicinity of Afrin, where a Turkish military incursion is unfolding is under risk again.

Salafi-Jihadi-Islamist elements instrumentalized by Turkey, under the umbrella of "Free Syrian Army", who could possibly target Yazidis with violence, as a community that is not recognized as a "People of the Book," as Yazidis have already been targeted in Syria and Iraq throughout this conflict.

The current military offensive and instability in the area put the lives of those Yazidis remaining there at a great risk which could result in dire and tragic consequences for the Yazidi community in Syria.

"Our fear is that jihadist or radical groups within the attacking forces could treat the Yazidis in a similar manner to that which ISIS employed and might, therefore, commit another genocide in Yazidi homelands, which include the following villages; Basofan (the largest Syrian Yazidi village-population of 3500 people before forced displacement), Faqira, Bafloun, Qastil Jandul, Qaibar, Burj Abdadlo, Ghazawiya, Shadir, Eiska, Kufir Zayit, Baa'i, Ein Dara, Qatma, Sinka, Ashka, Ali Qayna, Chaqla Koma, Qaila, Gonde Mazin, Kafir Safra, and the village of Jinders," the statement of Global Yazidi Organisation (Yazda) reads.