



Iraq – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 15 November 2016

Are there particular sects who are subjected to discrimination within Iraq e.g. Yazidi (Yezidi) and do they live mainly in one area?

A report published by the international NGO Minority Rights Group International, in a section titled “Key Findings”, states:

“Many minority communities in Iraq are now on the verge of disappearance. The Christian population, which before 2003 numbered as many as 1.4 million, had dwindled to 350,000 by early 2014, and since the ISIS advance is now estimated as under 250,000. Most of the Yezidi and Kaka’i populations have been forced from their traditional lands in Nineva and are now subsisting as IDPs or have fled the country altogether. Similarly, Nineva’s Shi’a Turkmen and Shabak have fled en masse to Shi’a majority areas in the south of Iraq.” (Minority rights Group International (4 July 2016) *No Way Home: Iraq’s minorities on the verge of disappearance*, p.5)

The 2016 US Department of State report on religious freedom in Iraq, in “Section I. Religious Demography”, states:

“Christian leaders estimate there are fewer than 250,000 Christians remaining in the country. The Christian population has declined over the last 10 years from a pre-2002 estimate of 800,000 to 1.4 million. Approximately 67 percent of Christians are Chaldean Catholics (an eastern rite of the Catholic Church); nearly 20 percent are members of the Assyrian Church of the East. The remainder are Syriac Orthodox, Syriac Catholic, Armenian Catholic, Armenian Orthodox, Anglican and other Protestant. Only 50 Evangelical Christian families reportedly remain in the IKR, down from approximately 5,000 in 2013.

Yezidi leaders report most of the approximately 350,000-400,000 Yezidis reside in the north. Estimates of the size of the Sabaean-Mandaean community vary. According to Sabaean-Mandaean leaders, no more than 3,000 remain in the country, mainly in the south with small pockets in the IKR and Baghdad. Bahai leaders report fewer than 2,000 members, spread throughout the country in small groups. According to Kaka’i (also known as Yarsani) activists, their community has approximately 300,000 members, located mainly in villages southeast of Kirkuk, in Diyala and Erbil in the north, and in Karbala. The newly appointed Jewish representative in the IKR Ministry of Endowment and Religious Affairs reports 430 Jewish families reside in the IKR. Fewer than 10 Jewish families are known to reside in Baghdad.” (US Department of State (10 August 2016) *2015 Report on International Religious Freedom – Iraq*)

A report published by Minority Rights Group International, in a section titled “Background on affected minorities in the conflict zone” (paragraph headed “Christians”), states:

"In the wake of the US-led invasion, community members were targeted for their religious differences as well as their perceived ties to the West, resulting in a large exodus of Christians from the country as refugees. Today, only around 350,000 Christians are still based in Iraq, mostly in Baghdad, Mosul and the Ninewa plain, Kirkuk, Basra as well as the three governorates in the Iraqi Kurdish Region." (Minority Rights Group International (February 2015) *Between the Millstones: The State of Iraq's Minorities Since the Fall of Mosul*, p.8)

A paragraph in this section headed "Kaka'i" states:

"Kaka'i, also known as Ahl-e Haqq or Yarsan, are estimated by community members to number between 110,000 and 200,000 in Iraq, mainly south-east of Kirkuk and in the Ninewa plain near Daquq and Hamdaniya, with others also based in Diyala, Erbil and Suleimaniya.⁸ They are commonly considered a Kurdish subgroup and branch of the Shi'a faith, though the religion differs in important ways. The Kaka'i faith dates to the 14th century in western Iran and contains elements of Zoroastrianism and Shi'a Islam. Nevertheless, their distinct practices and beliefs have resulted in some persecution. As a result, Kaka'i are secretive about their faith." (ibid, p.8)

A paragraph headed "Shabak", states:

"The Shabak community have been located for centuries in the Ninewa plain area, between the Khazir and Tigris rivers and near Mosul, with a population of 200,000–500,000.¹⁰ The majority are Shi'a Muslims, with Sunni Muslims making up the remaining 30 to 40 per cent. However, some Islamic militias view them as infidels and have targeted them as a result. Though culturally distinct, with their own customs, traditions, clothing and language, Shabaki – a mixture of Farsi, Arabic, Kurdish and Turkish – community members have been pressured to identify as Kurdish and experience persecution from both Kurds and Arabs as part of their broader territorial dispute over control of areas of Ninewa. Shabak in Mosul have been forced to leave due to harassment and killings, with many taking refuge in Karbala and the Kurdish region since the city's fall to ISIS." (ibid, p.8)

A paragraph headed "Turkmen" states:

"Turkmen, the third largest ethnic group in Iraq, are estimated by some community representatives to number as many as 2.5 to 3 million, though international sources give a range of between 500,000 and 600,000. Though the majority are Shi'a or Sunni Muslims, there are reportedly some 30,000 Christian Turkmen as well. Most reside in the northern areas of Iraq, with the largest concentration based in Kirkuk, and south as far as Wassit governorate, south-east of Baghdad." (ibid, p.8)

A paragraph headed "Yezidis", states:

"Yezidis are an ancient ethnic and religious group, present in the Middle East since approximately 4000 BC and based mainly in northern Iraq, though some are also based in neighbouring Syria and Turkey as well as various European countries. Most Yezidis speak Kurmanji, which is widely considered by both Yezidis and outsiders to be a dialect of Kurdish. Yezidism is also one

of the oldest religions in the world still practised today, combining pre-Islamic Zoroastrian, Manichaean, Jewish, Nestorian Christian and Muslim elements. Despite their distinct identity, some community members as well as Kurds consider Yezidis ethnically Kurdish. This reportedly has created conflict within the community and pressure from Kurdish officials and Kurdish-identifying community members, as well as death threats. In addition, due to a misinterpretation of their religion, some militants regard Yezidis as heretical and not 'People of the Book'. They have been regularly targeted with violence as a result.¹⁹ Prior to June 2014, the 2005 population of 700,000 had reportedly fallen to approximately 500,000,²⁰ with thousands of families having fled to Syria, Jordan and other states. Prior to June 2014, numerous incidents of arbitrary arrest, discrimination and other abuses against the community were reported by human rights groups." (ibid, p.9)

A report jointly published by the Heartland Alliance International (HAI) and Masarat Foundation for Cultural and Media Development (Masarat), in a section titled "Minorities in Iraq", lists the principal minority groups as follows:

1. Yezidis live on Sinjar Mountain (70 miles west of Mosul) and in the city of Shekhan. Yezidis constitute one of the oldest ethnic and religious communities in Iraq. Though the origins of their religion date back thousands of years, they are currently facing external threats that may produce unprecedented changes to their identity.
2. Iraqi Christians consist of numerous ethnic groups—Armenians, Chaldeans, Syriacs and Assyrians—and sects—Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant, and Baptist. They reside in different parts of Iraq but are concentrated in Baghdad, Erbil (Ainkawa neighborhood) and Mosul (Ninewa Plain).
3. The Shabaks are a minority group that has lived in northern Iraq for the past 500 years. They are predominantly Shiite Muslims, though some Shabaks are followers of Sunni Islam. The Shabak language is different from both Arabic and Kurdish. Shabaks live alongside other religious minorities, namely Christians, Yezidis and Kaka'is, in the Ninewa Plain of Mosul.
4. Turkmen live in northern Iraq, in an arc stretching across the districts of Tal Afar, Mosul, Erbil, Alton Kopri, Kirkuk, Tuz Khormatu, Kifri, and Khanaqin. Turkmen have demanded better representation in Iraqi government and society, believing themselves to constitute a fourth major component after Iraq's three majority groups described above. Their failure to achieve this designation has led them to embrace their minority status and the rights associated therewith.
5. Kaka'is are members of a religious minority, residing primarily in villages southeast of Kirkuk. Historians and researchers hold significantly diverse views on the Kaka'is, owing to the mystery, secrecy and symbolism shrouding their religious beliefs.
6. Mandaeans, concentrated in Baghdad and southern Iraq (Amarah City in particular), represent a culture that has overcome challenges throughout twenty centuries of imperial rule in the Mesopotamia region. After millennia of

continuous existence in Iraq, Mandaean numbers have reduced to only several thousand.

7. Iraqis of African origin (IAOs) primarily reside in the city of Basra. They are an emerging ethnic identity in Iraq, whose growth as a united group has been encouraged by Barack Obama's election to the US presidency. Black Iraqis do not originate from a single ethnic or national lineage: their ancestors were brought to Iraq from various African countries at different points in Iraqi history. Ancestors of IAOs include the Nubians (from Nuba) and the Zanzibari (from Zanzibar island in the Arab Sea). Other black Iraqis originate from Ghana and the Habasha region of modern-day Ethiopia." (Heartland Alliance International (HAI) and Masarat Foundation for Cultural and Media Development (Masarat) (2015) *At Crossroads: Human Rights Violations Against Iraqi Minorities After ISIS*, pp.8-9)

In a section titled "Hate speech and incitement against Yezidis" this report states:

"Following the extreme violence and massive displacement already faced by Yezidis during ISIS occupation, the minority group has been further beset by continued hate speech from Iraqi society. A small number of Muslim clerics appear regularly on media platforms such as Rudaw, Gelî Kurdistan, Kurdistan News, KNN, and Zagros to criticize Yezidis for not following Islam. The words of these clerics, who appear on widely-watched TV channels, and whose video clips are spread across social networking sites, inflame sectarian tensions and incite audiences of these messages to violence. A recent broadcasted address by Islamic activist Abdul Wahid Bank Khawazi sparked anger and resentment among the Yezidi community by calling into question their religious beliefs and national affiliation. 'The word Yezidi derives from Yazeed bin Muawiyah,' said Khawazi in his filmed segment, 'which means that the Yezidis are Arabs. If not, the word Yazda or Yazdan refers to Persia, which means that they are Persians. This shows that, in any event, they are not Kurds.' Khawazi continued, 'Yezidis are known to say, 'Ya Khoudi Yazdan Mah Zen,' meaning 'in the name of God the great'; this is a Persian sentence.' In the recording, Khawazi also raised doubts about Yezidi faith and sharply criticized their behavior and their rituals. Majid Hassan, a Yezidi researcher at the University of Bamberg, Germany, specializing in religious minorities, explained that 'this example is not unique; Yezidis are often accused of blasphemy, both publicly and in mosques by clerics and preachers.' Religious figures Dr. Abdul Latif and Mullah Farazanda, as well as senior preachers Abdul Samad and doctor/professor Abdul Wahid, openly attack Yezidis, Jews, and Christians in many of their sermons and addresses." (ibid, p.13)

The Introduction to a report from the UN Human Rights Council, in paragraphs 1 and 2, states:

"1. In the early hours of 3 August 2014, fighters from the terrorist group, the Islamic State of Iraq and Al-Sham (ISIS), flooded out of their bases in Syria and Iraq, and swept across Sinjar. The Sinjar region of northern Iraq is, at its nearest point, less than 15 kilometres from the Syrian border. It is home to the majority of the world's Yazidis, a distinct religious community whose beliefs and practice span thousands of years, and whose adherents ISIS publicly reviles as infidels.

2. Within days of the attack, reports emerged of ISIS committing almost unimaginable atrocities against the Yazidi community: of men being killed or forced to convert; of women and girls, some as young as nine, sold at market and held in sexual slavery by ISIS fighters; and of boys ripped from their families and forced into ISIS training camps. It was quickly apparent that the horrors being visited upon captured Yazidis were occurring systematically across ISIS-controlled territory in Syria and Iraq." (UN Human Rights Council (15 June 2016) "*They came to destroy": ISIS Crimes Against the Yazidis*, p.3)

In a section titled "The 3 August 2014 ISIS Attack" (paragraphs 23 to 30) this report states:

"23. In the early hours of 3 August 2014, ISIS fighters attacked Sinjar from Mosul and Tel Afar in Iraq, and Al-Shaddadi and the Tel Hamis region (Hasakah) in Syria. The attack was well organised with hundreds of ISIS fighters acting in concert with each other as they seized towns and villages on all sides of Mount Sinjar. Information documented by the Commission strongly suggests that the command centre for the operation was based in Mosul, with an important operational centre in Tel Afar.

24. As they moved into Sinjar, ISIS fighters faced little or no resistance. Many of the Peshmerga reportedly withdrew in the face of the ISIS advance, leaving much of the Sinjar region defenceless. The decision to withdraw was not effectively communicated to the local population. No evacuation orders were issued and most villages were initially unaware of the collapse of the security situation.

25. As word spread that the Peshmerga had left their checkpoints, a few ad hoc groups of lightly armed, local Yazidi men mounted a very limited defence of some villages, such as Girzerik and Siba Sheikh Khedir, in an attempt to give their families and neighbours more time to escape. By daybreak, Yazidi families from hundreds of villages across Sinjar were fleeing their homes in fear and panic. They took little with them. Others were advised by Arab neighbours to stay in the villages and raise white flags over their houses.

26. By the time ISIS entered Sinjar, there were few military objectives in the region. ISIS fighters focussed their attention on capturing Yazidis. After controlling the main roads and all strategic junctions, fighters set up checkpoints and sent mobile patrols to search for fleeing Yazidi families. Within hours, Yazidis who had been unable to escape to the nearby city of Duhok found themselves encircled by armed, black-clad ISIS fighters.

27. Those who fled early enough to reach the upper plateau of Mount Sinjar were besieged by ISIS. A humanitarian crisis quickly unfolded as ISIS trapped tens of thousands of Yazidi men, women, and children in temperatures rising above 50 degrees Celsius and prevented them from accessing to water, food or medical care. On 7 August 2014, at the request of the Iraqi Government, US President Barack Obama announced American military action to help the Yazidis trapped on Mount Sinjar.¹¹ American, Iraqi, British, French, and Australian forces were involved in airdrops of water and other supplies to the besieged Yazidis. ISIS fighters shot at planes airdropping aid, and at helicopters attempting to evacuate the most vulnerable Yazidis.

28. Hundreds of Yazidis – including infants and young children – died on Mount Sinjar before the Syrian Kurdish forces, the YPG, were able to open a corridor from Syria to Mount Sinjar, allowing for those besieged on the mountain to be moved to safety. Together with Yazidi volunteers, they repelled ISIS attacks on the corridor, as it sought to re-establish the siege.

29. On lower ground, ISIS fighters captured thousands of Yazidis in their villages or on the roads as they fled between 3 and 5 August 2014. Almost all villages were emptied within 72 hours of the attack, with the exception of Kocho village which was not emptied until 15 August 2014. The conduct of ISIS fighters, on capturing thousands of Yazidis as they fled, cleaved closely to a set and evidently pre-determined pattern, with only minor deviations.

30. Regardless of where the Yazidi families were captured, ISIS fighters swiftly ordered the separation of males and females, with the exception of boys who had not reached puberty,¹² who were allowed to remain with their mothers. Within an hour, those who survived capture were forcibly transferred to temporary holding sites. ISIS operational commanders communicated these primary transfer locations, located within the Sinjar area and in Hasakah governorate in Syria, to their fighters and checkpoints by walkie-talkies and mobile phones. Secondary transfers were later conducted in an organized manner, with buses and large vehicles moving captured Yazidis to designated holding sites in Mosul, Tel Afar and Baaj, deeper inside ISIS-controlled territory.” (ibid, pp.6-8)

An Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada response to a request for information on the situation of religious minorities in Iraq, in a section titled “Yezidi” (section 1.2), states:

“The Institute for International Law and Human Rights (IILHR), a non-profit group that ‘engages with leaders of both the Iraqi government and civil society to strengthen approaches to human rights issues,’ reports that approximately 3 percent of the Iraqi population is composed of Christian, Yezidi, Mandaean-Sabean, Baha'i, Shabak, and Kaka'i groups. Sources report that, as of 2013, there are 500,000 Yezidi in Iraq; the population has fallen from approximately 700,000 to 750,000 Yezidis in 2005. According to the US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), Yezidi are indigenous to Nineveh [Ninewa, Ninawa] and Dahuk [Dohuk] in northern Iraq. According to a report from a joint Finnish-Swiss fact-finding mission to the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) area in 2011,

[most] Yazidis originate from the disputed areas [Ninewa, Kirkuk, and parts of Salah ad din and Diyala provinces]. Jabal Sinjar [west of Mosul, also known as Shingal, Singal or Sengal] is regarded as the main center of Yazidis in Iraq. ... The population in some villages in the Ninawa plains is also heavily Yazidi

Yezidi also live near Shaikhan [also Sheykhan], which is ‘east of Mosul in the Ninawa governorate, but controlled by KRG [Kurdish Regional Government]’ and is also the location of the ‘holiest Yezidi shrine,’ in Lalesh.

Sources report that Yezidi people are perceived as ‘devil worshippers’ due to societal misunderstandings of their religion, and are seen in this way even by moderate Muslims and other groups. Source note that Yezidis are regarded

as ‘infidels’ by Islamist militants in Iraq.” (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (10 July 2014) *IRQ104909.E - Iraq: Situation of religious minorities, including practitioners of "Zoroastrianism" and [Yazidi]; treatment by other groups (including the Islamic State of Iraq and al Sham, ISIS) and the government; state protection (2011-July 2014)*)

A report from Human Rights Watch states:

“The Islamic State of Iraq and Sham (ISIS) is killing, kidnapping, and threatening religious and ethnic minorities in and around the northern Iraqi city of Mosul. Since capturing Mosul on June 10, 2014, the armed Sunni extremist group has seized at least 200 Turkmen, Shabaks, and Yazidis, killed at least 11 of them, and ordered all Christians to convert to Islam, pay ‘tribute’ money, or leave Mosul by July 19.

On June 29, ISIS abducted two nuns and three Christian orphans, whom it held for 15 days. Around that same time, ISIS issued orders barring Yazidi and Christian employees, as well as ethnic Kurds, from returning to their government jobs in Mosul, two regional government officials and a priest told Human Rights Watch.

Virtually all Turkmen and Shabaks – tens of thousands of families – have fled their communities near Mosul as a result of ISIS raids, in which the fighters seize local men and pillage homes and places of worship, residents of those villages said. Mosul’s few remaining Christian families also have fled, local priests said.” (Human Rights Watch (19 July 2014) *Iraq: ISIS Abducting, Killing, Expelling Minorities*)

In a section headed “51 Yazidis Seized, 2 Killed, 21 Still Held or Missing” this report states:

“Since June 10, ISIS has kidnapped or captured at least 51 Yazidis across Iraq, more than half of them members of security forces and the rest civilians, according to four Yazidi community leaders and activists. They said ISIS had summarily executed at least 2 of the captives, both national guardsmen, and released 27 other Yazidis, all but three for ransom. The other 21 Yazidis remained missing. Yazidis are among Iraq’s most marginalized groups. Many work as farmhands or border guards. The vast majority of the Yazidis were captured in or around Sinjar, a predominantly Yazidi town 125 kilometers northwest of Mosul, and in Mosul, while nine were taken from elsewhere in Iraq, they said.” (*ibid*)

A report from Amnesty International states:

“A clear pattern is emerging whereby ISIS is deliberately targeting Iraq’s minorities as well as others suspected of opposing the group, singling them out for detention and abduction,’ said Donatella Rovera, Amnesty International’s Senior Crisis Response Adviser currently in northern Iraq. ‘Every day I meet families desperate to find their sons, husbands and brothers who have been taken by ISIS groups and whose fate and whereabouts are unknown. Most do not want the names of their missing relatives mentioned because they fear for their safety.’ Distraught family members of the Yezidi border guards and soldiers who are still held by ISIS told Amnesty International that they are desperately worried about their

missing loved ones. ‘We are simple people who have always lived in harmony with our Muslim brothers and neighbours. We appeal to the humanity of those who are holding our son to let him come to his children,’ the parents of one of the missing men said. ISIS has often killed those they detained, both civilians and army and security forces members.” (Amnesty International (1 July 2014) *Iraq: Yezidis captured by ISIS amid mounting sectarian attacks*)

See also Amnesty International report which states:

“Since IS fighters attacked the Sinjar region, in north-western Iraq in August 2014, Yezidis have been systematically and deliberately targeted. Thousands have been abducted; hundreds of men and boys have been massacred; many were threatened with death if they did not convert to Islam. Abducted Yezidi women and girls are separated from their relatives and then ‘gifted’ or ‘sold’ to other IS fighters in Iraq and Syria. They are often exchanged between fighters multiple times, raped, beaten or otherwise physically abused, deprived of food and other necessities, and forced to clean, cook and do other chores for their captors.

Many that Amnesty International spoke to said their children were seized from them. Boys over the age of seven were taken to be indoctrinated and trained as fighters, while girls as young as nine were ‘sold’ as sex slaves. Local politicians, activists and care-providers estimate that some 3,800 women and children remain in IS captivity. The fate of hundreds of abducted Yezidi men remains unknown and most are feared dead.” (Amnesty International (10 October 2016) *Iraq: Yezidi survivors of horrific abuse in IS captivity neglected by international community*)

The Introduction to a report from the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) states:

“The Human Rights Office of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) have monitored the situation of the Yezidi, documenting their experiences since the attack on Sinjar in August 2014. Individuals and families interviewed by UNAMI/OHCHR rendered accounts of their terrified and chaotic flight from their homes and the horrors they witnessed and experienced. In Ba’aj, Mosul, Tel Afar and other areas under ISIL control, many Yezidi were killed during the initial attack and thousands were captured. Men and women were systematically separated, with girls and young women often then further separated from the older women and forced into sexual slavery. Individuals repeatedly described how they had been subjected to forced labour and ill-treatment, mainly in Tel Afar District, Ninewa Governorate, while others told of being trafficked into Syria and sold to ISIL members. Thousands of Yezidi remain missing. Furthermore, shrines, and other sites of religious and cultural significance for the Yezidi were also deliberately and systematically destroyed by ISIL in an attempt to eradicate the religious, physical and material culture of the Yezidi people.” (UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) (August 2016) *A Call for Accountability and Protection: Yezidi Survivors of Atrocities Committed by ISIL*, p.4)

In a section titled “Human Rights Abuses committed by ISIL against the Yezidi between August 2014 and June 2016” (sub-section headed “Forced displacement”), this report states:

"Although many Yezidi managed to reach Mount Sinjar, the situation on the Mountain was extremely difficult. There were thousands of Yezidi trapped on the top of the Mountain, with no humanitarian supplies. One witness, who had been separated from his wife and four children as they fled, told UNAMI/OHCHR that he was trapped on the Mountain with one son for five days with thousands of other Yezidi. He saw three women and 10 children die from thirst and hunger. He later learned that his other family members had been taken by ISIL. Until August 2015, the witness said he had some contact with his wife and children, and he had managed to discover that one of his daughters had been taken to Raqqa, Syria. However, since August 2015, he has had no information about their whereabouts." (ibid, p.9)

In a sub-section headed "Forced conversions" this report states:

"Those Yezidi who managed to survive the initial onslaught reported that, usually as soon as they were intercepted by ISIL, they were told to convert to Islam or be killed. Those who refused were killed immediately, often in front of the other captured Yezidi. Those who complied under this extreme duress, were nonetheless subjected to severe ill-treatment and sexual violence.

For instance, one witness who was in Sinjar city with her family reported that ISIL arrived around 8:30am on 3 August 2014 in multiple trucks. The Peshmerga had withdrawn from the city without telling residents. The ISIL members were wearing 'Afghan' clothing but knew her brother and cousin by name. They were told to convert to Islam or be killed. They complied as they felt they had no choice.

A witness from Tal Qasab village returned from Mount Sinjar to Sinjar city with his family after they were convinced by ISIL that they would not harm them. As they approached the stadium, he saw two young men lying dead on the ground with blood on them. At a checkpoint near the stadium, women and men were separated and taken to a former government building. Two men, aged between 40 and 45 years old, tried to escape and were shot dead. Three days later, the 200 to 250 men in the building were blindfolded and had their hands tied behind their backs. They were made to kneel for about 24 hours. ISIL members filmed them and told them that they were going to kill them all. ISIL then told them that, purportedly on the orders of ISIL leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, if they converted to Islam they would not be killed. The men accepted to convert." (ibid, p.10)

See also sub-section headed "Systematic and widespread killings" which states:

"After ISIL advanced into and captured Sinjar city as well as surrounding Yezidi villages, multiple witnesses reported that ISIL members killed scores of Yezidi civilians. According to accounts of witnesses and survivors, mass killings of Yezidi along with other acts perpetrated by ISIL members appear to have been committed as part of a systematic pattern of similar conduct carried out with the intent to destroy the Yezidi as a group." (ibid, p.12)

An article from UK newspaper The Guardian refers to the current situation in the Sinjar region as follows:

“Sinjar and the region around it in northern Iraq, a centre for the minority Yazidi group and symbol of their suffering under Isis, was liberated nearly a year ago. But since then there has been little clearance, no rebuilding, and no formal investigation of the mass graves that have been found – although some are now marked by wire fence or tape. There has been no restoration of public services or call for refugees to return. The whole area still feels ghostly and abandoned, still waiting for life to return nearly a year after Isis left. The only residents are cats, wary soldiers, and a few shopkeepers who serve them. The destruction is so complete that officials are considering leaving the ruins as a monument to their people’s suffering.” (The Guardian (31 October 2016) *Sinjar still gripped by fear a year after liberation from Isis*)

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research and Information Unit within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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