



Yazda Statement on the Identity of Yazidis

Power sharing in Iraq and Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) after the fallout of Iraqi totalitarian regime in April 2003 have diminished Yazidi representation in both political and administrative aspects in Iraq and KRI. Yazidis have not been treated equally as other Iraqi and KRI citizens.

With respect to Iraq and federal authorities, Yazidi rights have been repudiated from on allegory basis that Yazidis have a shared identity with the Kurds, and in the KRI, Yazidis have been treated on the basis of their religious affiliation as a second-class citizen, they have been granted no rights on the ethnicity claims, Yazidis have been deprived with respect to voting rights, budget and have been treated as “citizens under demand” different from general public of Kurdistan. Yazidi representation in both Iraq and KRI have been nominal under influence of special interests distant from high interests of Yazidi People.

Yazda, as a Global Yazidi Organization, recognizes and affirms that the determination of the Identity is a personal choice for every Yazidi, and Yazidis have the right as a human society with inherited values and characters to determine their peculiarity under which they have been subjected to persecution and genocide and their rights have been deprived. No one shall have the right to impose a specific identity on the Yazidis, themselves alone, the Yazidis, and as individuals, have the rights to determine their identity, and that Yazidis as an ethno-religious group with inherited culture have the rights to determine their own identity. Yazidis have been subject throughout their history to persecution and genocide,

including the last Genocide in 2014 only because their identity were Yazidis.

The most pressing problem we are deeply concerned about is that when Yazidis are being exploited and a foreign identity is forcefully imposed on them, this happened during Baath rule where Yazidis were Arabized under the Arabic Nationalism, same thing was imposed by the Ottomans before them. Yazda is concerned that again new attempts to forcefully change Yazidi Identity are being made by Iraqi Kurdish blocs or foreign Kurdish blocs as the forcing of Zoroastrian identity on Yazidis. To date, there is no acknowledgment of Yazidi religion as a legitimate religion in Iraq, including by most senior officials of the Iraqi government where Yazidis are referred to as a sect – on the interpretation that Yazidis are part of larger Islam. It must be recognized that Yazidis are not a sect but a legitimate faith and an ethno-religious group with its own civilization, culture, and history.

On the international stage, also in the aftermath of the Yazidi Genocide in August 3 2014, certain authorities utilized some Yazidi elites and politicians to utilized the Yazidi tragedy to receive arms, funding, or support from the international community, we condemn such acts that are not conforming to the human values and principles specially that this comes in a time of capital tragedy of Genocide.

Yazda position is that we do not allow fusibility of the Yazidi Identity in any other identity, such successful attempts of imposing a different identity will pull Yazidis into a more damaging ideological and battlefield conflicts which will further disintegrate the Yazidi community and make it more prone to be victims of future wars and genocide.

Yazidis are united that Yazidis have one ethno-religious identity and that such pertinence is the underlining reason of Yazidi persecution. Additionally, Yazidis are a global society not confined to Iraq or Kurdistan, today Yazidis are citizens of countries such as Germany, USA, Sweden,

Georgia, Russia, and beyond. Yazidis are an ethno-religious group with exclusive culture, social and religious values, and history. Therefore, Yazidis must be accepted as an ethno-religious group with particular culture and that for this identify they have greatly suffered.

Almost all Yazidi Public with exception of some with special interest believe that the question of Yazidis was never an ethnicity question, but it has been always a question of existence and that any political or nonpolitical project must aim to finding a solution so that Yazidis can exist with their inherited identity without forced alteration.

The concept of Ethnicity is not something Iraqis or people of Kurdistan have agreed on and it is a speculative term that not necessarily matched modern definition of Ethnicity which defines ethnicity as the feeling or pride inherent to belonging to a country by a large number of people whoe share culture, history, language, etc with intention to create a separate nation. Other definitions of Ethnicity have also been proposed.

While Yazda declares this position on identity, we would like to sincerely thank all People of Kurdistan who provided immense help to the Yazidis in their plight, we also greatly value what we share with the Kurds including the language, homeland and other important shared values. Yazda and on behalf of our supporters, also highlights its support for the cause of Kurdish People and that their case is a legitimate case, our support for the Kurds include our support for their inspirations of self-determination. Without any doubt, we are looking for a friendly relationship with the Kurdish People and look forward for friendly relationship with all political powers in the four parts of Kurdistan. Yazda would seek creating an environment for the Yazidis to have their full rights protected including the right to freely choose their national affiliation, our goal is that guarantees should be given that Yazidis can live free with dignity under a just social system.

However, historical reality indicates that Yazidis were and are treated differently in their Kurdish neighborhood and that they were not treated as Kurds. This situation can be seen by that fact that Yazidis were singled out to be destined for many subsequent genocides, some by the Kurds themselves, this persecution have annihilated Yazidi existence in Turkish Kurdistan where more than a half million Yazidis were forced to convert to Islam or immigrate, Kurds existence remained while Yazidis existence was terminated.

In Syrian Kurdistan, Yazidis there were also forced to change their identity, religion, and culture, today there is only about two thousand Yazidis in Syria compared to several hundreds of thousands only three centuries ago.

The existence of Yazidis in KRI did not also match the fate of Kurds, the Yazidis alone were subject to systematic persecution and genocide because of their faith, the last genocide in 2014 where Yazidis were forced to convert and their women were enslaved, this is something that Kurds were not subjected to.

Yazda defined identity as the shared fate and shared present of a group of people, this vision obligates us to confirm that Yazidis are a People with a unique ethno-religious identity, and that this identity is threated to extinction. Protection of this identity in Iraq, Kurdistan, or other part of the world is the shared inspiration of all Yazidis and that Yazidis friends should help them preserve such identity and pledge not to exploit them.

Yazda condemns in strongest terms the intervention by the Yazidi Member of Parliament Vian Dakhil that prevented listing of Yazidis as one of Iraqi components in the Iraqi National law, Yazidis must be given the right to freely define themselves in the way and form they find appropriate, the exploitation of Yazidi elite for special interests is something Yazda is strongly object and condemns. Yazda declares, and we believe this is the opinion of most of Yazidis, that Ms. Dakhil does not represent the voice of

Yazidis, Ms. Dakhil only represent a small fraction of those with special interests. The voice of majority of Yazidis must be respected.

Yazda vision is that Yazidis are citizens of Iraq and Kurdistan equally, this belonging is a belonging to a land not to other ethnicities. We respect our presence on the Kurdistan land, the Yazidis will be a positive part of the land of Kurdistan and equally to the land of Iraq. This same approach is applicable to Yazidis living in other countries in the west, east and all over the world, Yazidis are proud and loyal to every land they live on and must be such loyal people. We also support the right of Kurdish People in the Kurdish case where kurds have greatly suffered, we also support the case of Kurdistan as a homeland. The Kurds have been subject to a great tragedy and they have been persecuted for who they are such as the persecution of Kurds in Halabja and Anfal or what is currently takes place in Turkey and Iran. The Kurds have been marginalized for their ethnical identity. Yazda greatly respects the shared links with the Kurdish People and consider Kurds as brothers and sisters to Yazidis. However, such shared linkages shall not be used to change the reality that Yazidis are a people with their own ethno-religious identity and culture that much be respected and acknowledged.

Our respect for the brotherhood relationship with the Kurds, and our shared links of land and language, much be utilized to create a balanced relationship between the Yazidis and the Kurds, this relationship must be built on mutual respect and not forced assimilation.

The Yazidi situation can best be compared to the Jewish case and Jewish Identity which is based on the Jewish Peoplehood which is the shared identity of a people that live in different parts of the world, Jews are proud of their home countries in which they are citizens, but the history of persecution is for their identity and hence this have created one global identity for all Jews. This condition is also true for the Yazidi case, Yazidis are Yazidis on the idea of Yazidis Peoplehood and this must be respected

and accepted especially after the Genocide, Yazidis must be accepted in Iraq and Kurdistan under this “Yazidi Peoplehood” identity and no other identity should be forced on them.

Yazda requests that Yazidis to be treated as an ethno-religious or ethnical-religious distinctive group of people and that all their rights should be protected in Kurdistan and Iraq on this basis. Depriving the Yazidis from this right and ability to self-identify and disrespect for their distinctive peoplehood will be another factor to expedite Yazidi exit from their homeland.

Yazda requests that Yazidis as a People must be recognized and listed accordingly equal to other Iraqi components, we request also that KRI addresses Yazidis in all their calculations and power sharing as a unique independent People because preservation of existence of Yazidis in Kurdistan depends on granting this right. YPG and PKK should stop imposing teachings and ideological conversion of Yazidi People in their areas in Sinjar and Syria. Yazidis have full rights to request a special situation similar to Chaldean, Assyria, Syriac, Armenian, Turkmen, Shabak and others.

Yazidi case after subjection to the Genocide of August 3 2014 have been alleviated the Yazidi case is now a humanitarian case where an entire people was persecuted, thousands were enslaved, and hundreds of thousands were forcefully displaced or forcefully converted to Islam, the Yazidi case is no longer a local case but it is an international case.

Finally, Yazda request that Yazidis themselves come into a concession on this position, we request that the spiritual council under the leadership of Prince Tahseen Saeed Bak and leaders of Yazidi military forces and social and community leaders to support Yazda statement to be adopted as a Yazidi formal position on the identity matter.

Signed By
Yazda Board of Directors
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