



Free Yezidi Foundation Statement

Condemnation of Anti-Yezidi Rhetoric

4 May 2023

The Free Yezidi Foundation (FYF) condemns the recent rise in hate speech and violence directed against the Yezidi community in Iraq and urges both the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government to publicly denounce this xenophobia.

The uptick in hate speech corresponds to the concerns expressed by Yezidis regarding the return of suspected ISIS-affiliated families to Sinjar – a valid concern that the Free Yezidi Foundation shares. Some groups falsely claimed that Yezidis had attacked and set fire to a mosque. Yezidi leaders, Ninewa security authorities, and others confirmed that no such attack occurred, and this was misinformation. That did not stop thousands of Iraqis from making inflammatory and hate-mongering statements on social media, such as “ISIS was right about what they did to Yezidis” and “We should kill Yezidis. They are devil-worshippers.”

To exacerbate matters further, many local clerics in the Kurdistan Region began spewing hatred against the Yezidis during their Friday prayers. Videos posted on social media show the Mullahs describing Yezidis as “infidels” and “devil-worshippers” and calling for their immediate arrest.

This incendiary rhetoric used against Yezidis has spread throughout Iraq and is reminiscent of the xenophobic ideology peddled by ISIS to justify its genocide against the Yezidi community. This has frightened Yezidi civilians and illustrates the ongoing discrimination against a community that faces compounding vulnerabilities resulting from protracted displacement and lack of support to sustainably rebuild their homeland.

Yezidis have lived in fear for far too long in their own country. Generations of marginalization and resource deprivation left the community vulnerable to the onslaught of ISIS’ violence. Responsible authorities must denounce hate speech against Yezidis. Remaining silent contributes to the ongoing insecurity of a community that has endured immeasurable atrocities.

Yezidis deserve to live without fear. They deserve peace, freedom of religion, and the same opportunities afforded to all Iraqis. The surest way to prevent future violence is to publicly condemn hate speech and disempower those using it to incite hatred and fear.

The Iraqi and Kurdistan Regional Governments and embassies and consulates must condemn hate speech and promote equal rights and security for all Iraqi citizens.

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