



Free Yezidi Foundation Statement

Urgent Need for Protection of Yezidi civilians in Syria

11 January 2026

Overview

The Yezidi community is concerned by events in Sheikh Maqsood and Al-Ashrafieh, particularly regarding Syria's small but highly vulnerable Yezidi community. We have received direct reports from Yezidi sources on the ground in the conflict-affected areas in and around Aleppo, Syria, regarding the dire situation of approximately 1,200 displaced Yezidi families. These families, originally from Afrin, were forced to flee from their homes several years ago due to targeted attacks against them by Islamist extremist groups, motivated by religious persecution against the Yezidi community. In 2014, ISIS committed the Yezidi Genocide, which included the mass execution of Yezidi men and older women, and the abduction and mass rape and sexual enslavement of Yezidi women and children. The religious-based violence against Yezidis by Islamist groups puts the small Yezidi community in Syria at heightened risk.

Approximately 800 Yezidi families have been forced to return to the areas of origin in Afrin amid the chaos. However, Afrin remains under the control of the same extremist factions that previously drove them out. This forced return puts them in extreme danger, as Yezidis continue to be systematically persecuted for their religious beliefs. At time of writing, communication with these 800 families has been severed, leaving their current condition unknown. Like other displaced, they are also reportedly facing shortages of food, water, shelter, and medical care, aside from the threat of religious-based violence. The latest we have heard, the men in the families are being separate from the families by force, much like occurred in the Yezidi Genocide prior to the executions and the mass rapes.

Approximately 400 families remain trapped in Aleppo, sheltering in churches and makeshift buildings for refuge. They live in fear, with limited access to food, humanitarian aid, or safe passage. All 1,200 families are at immediate risk of violence and loss of life.

Confirmed civilian casualties among Yezidis thus far are Ibrahim Khalil (male), and Jacklin Hassko (female). We call upon the international community to assist Yezidi civil society in restoring communication, establishing a safe humanitarian corridor, and urging Syrian authorities to ensure its forces refrain from any form of religious-based violence against religious or ethnic minority communities. Many of our colleagues collecting information from Aleppo's Yezidi population are themselves Yezidi Genocide survivors from Sinjar, Iraq. They witnessed firsthand the consequences of delayed interventions and ignored warnings. The thousands of Yezidis from Aleppo depend on us and on our friends and colleagues in the international community, to heed their pleas for help. We urge the United States, European allies, Middle Eastern states, and all those committed to the protection of unarmed civilians to stand with us and prevent atrocities against Yezidis and other religious and ethnic minority communities in Syria. Yezidi cannot bear another genocide.



Accounts from Three Yezidi Sources in Syria

Manaf Jafo (Head of the Yazidi House in Aleppo):

Jafo reports that the Yezidis in Aleppo fled from Afrin in 2019 because of the Turkish-backed Islamist groups invaded the region and committed crimes against the local population. Jafo described the assault on the Kurdish neighborhoods, which he witnessed, as a systematic massacre. He recalls Islamist groups indiscriminately shelling and bombarding the neighborhoods. Jafo says that the fate of the 800 Yezidi families that fled back to Afrin is unclear. He believes they are likely to have faced violence, as he witnessed the presence of many radical Islamist elements among Syrian Government forces operating in Aleppo. He also described militants carrying ISIL flags. He noticed a militant with this flag in an Al-Arabiya coverage of the fighting. Jafo is also worried about the remaining 400 families trapped in Aleppo and is not aware of their fate due to lack of internet connection.

Mariam Jirdo (Head of Yazidi House in Afrin):

Jirdo confirms that 800-900 Yezidi families fled the assault in Aleppo and headed to Afrin, which she says is controlled by the same Islamist groups that they had previously escaped from. Jirdo pleads for help from the United States to save the Yezidis in Syria and help provide for their security. She says that as a Yezidi woman, she fears that the same crimes committed against the Yezidi community in 2014 in Sinjar, particularly the sexual violence and slavery, are likely to be carried out again in Syria against Yezidis if immediate intervention does not take place.

Anonymous Source:

As a secondary source, this person says that his contacts in Afrin confirm that crimes carried out against Yezidis have already occurred. He reports that once the identities of the 800 Yezidi families displaced to Afrin were revealed, the Islamist groups systematically separated the Yezidi males, including men and older boys, from the females. This process is the same as the process employed by ISIS when it carried out the Yezidi Genocide in Sinjar in 2014. He says that these Yezidi civilians have now been displaced twice. There are no SDF, YPG, or Asayish forces among them, they are civilians. The reason they are targeted is because of their religion. He also pleads to the United States and fears the same process will lead to a Yezidi Genocide in Syria.

* Manaf Jafo and Mariam Jirdo are currently in areas in Syria where retribution for public dissemination of this information could be extremely dangerous. However, they have communicated to us that they are already at heightened risk of attack because of their Yezidi religious identity, and they wish to publicly share their perspectives with the hope that it will elicit assistance from the United States and the international community for endangered Yezidis in Syria.

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