

Working Session 12

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The Plight of Yazidi Migrants in Turkey

Distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

I am Uzey Bulut, a writer for the Gatestone Institute, an international policy council.

Yazidis who fled genocide in Iraq in 2014 and arrived in Turkey have not been granted any migrant rights by the Turkish government. Instead, the Turkish government has categorized them as “guests.” Some Yazidis have applied to the United Nations to be able to migrate to Western countries.

The 2014 invasion of the region of Sinjar in Iraq by the Islamic State (ISIS) brought a mostly forgotten community to the attention of the world: the Yazidis, a severely persecuted, non-Muslim people.

When ISIS invaded Sinjar four years ago, hundreds of defenseless Yazidi men and elderly women were murdered. Yazidi girls and women became the victims of widespread abduction, sexual abuse and slavery. Those who could fled their homeland for their lives.

Azad Barış, founding president of the Yazidi Cultural Foundation, said that “the Turkish government never wanted Yazidis to come to Turkey and thus created several obstacles to stop them from migrating to Turkey. When the genocide first took place in Sinjar, the Turkish government required Yazidis to get visas to enter Turkey, which forced many Yazidis to enter Turkey illegally,” Barış said.

And two weeks ago, the refugee camp in the town of Midyat was closed by the government and Yazidis were pressured to flee to another camp in another city, Gaziantep. Barış said that Yazidis have refused to go there, for ISIS supporters are believed to be staying in the refugee camps in Gaziantep.

Some Yazidis have returned to northern Iraq. But Yazidis who still stay in Turkey no longer live in refugee camps. They are scattered throughout the country, trying to survive with their own limited resources.

They are currently 1,200 Iraqi Yazidis in Turkey. Most of them want to find a way to migrate to the safety of European countries, Barış said. Dawood Saleh, a Yazidi author and activist, was in Sinjar when ISIS began its genocide there in 2014. “War and genocide,” he said, “which Yazidis have recently experienced once

again, cause the destruction of the human soul. Yazidis in general suffer from an unprecedented psychological crisis.”

If Sinjar, which has been destroyed by ISIS, is not rebuilt and remains open to assaults from jihadist terrorists, around 300,000 Yazidis will be forced to look for ways to migrate to Western countries in order to survive.

Yazidis, one of the most peaceful peoples on earth, have for centuries been targeted for their faith by Islamists in their native lands that contain parts of Iraq, Turkey and Syria. They have been suffering enormously and have been largely forgotten by world governments and the international community.

All Western states should give priority to Yazidis when granting refugee status to people.

I recommend that the OSCE chairmanship should dedicate its resources to raise awareness about the plight of the Yazidis and help them return to a safe and free Sinjar. As for Yazidis who want to be migrants in the West, the OSCE should constantly emphasize on international platforms the urgent need to facilitate Yazidi migration and urge all civilized nations to help first the Yazidis, these most beleaguered, persecuted and most benign of immigrants.

Thank you.

For more about this issue, please read: “Years after Genocide, Yazidis Urgently Need Help,” by Uzay Bulut, Gatestone Institute, June 27, 2018:

<https://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/12590/yazidis-need-help>