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3.10.2. Yazidis

COMMON ANALYSIS
Last update: November 2024

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI reports: Targeting 2022, 4.3, 4.3.1, 4.3.2, 4.3.3; Country Focus 2024, 1.2.1, 1.3.1. Country Guidance should not be referred to as source of COI.

The Yazidis are a minority ethno-religious group. Prior to the takeover by ISIL in 2014, the largest Yazidi community resided in the area of Mount Sinjar in Ninewa. Estimates on the Yazidi population differ significantly. In 2019 one source indicated that the number of Yazidis in northern Iraq hover between 400 000 and 500 000. In 2021, around 200 000 Yazidis were displaced, most of them living in KRI camps. Yazidis self-identify first by religion and then by ethnicity. The Iraqi constitution guarantees freedom of religious belief and practices for Yazidis.

Thousands of Yazidis were killed or abducted by ISIL during its rule. Yazidi women and girls suffered rape, torture, and slavery under ISIL captivity and pregnant survivors of sexual violence were highly vulnerable to various forms of violence. Younger boys faced indoctrination, beatings and torture by ISIL and commonly became child soldiers.

Step 1: Do the reported acts amount to persecution?

Some acts to which Yazidis could be exposed are of such severe nature that they would amount to persecution. As noted above, in previous years, ISIL committed persecutory acts against Yazidis. More recently, PMF have continued to engage in acts of violence and enforced disappearance against Yazidis. Children born out of rape are reported to be vulnerable to retribution, ‘honour’ killings and abandonment. Militias have also recruited Yazidi children.

The severity and/or repetitiveness of other acts that Yazidi could be subjected to and whether they occur as an accumulation of various measures, should be also considered. Stigma against Yazidis victims of sexual violence and discrimination against children born out of rape within the Yazidi communities have been reported, as Yazidis do not consider these children as belonging to their communities. Yazidi women have been rejected by their communities for refusal to abandon their children born out of rape. These children and their mothers have also difficulties accessing government services due to the lack of identification documents. Even though some

progress was achieved by the Iraqi government to provide compensation for Yazidis, they have remained marginalised, including in relation to access to the labour market. In 2023, a campaign of hate speech reportedly targeted the Yazidi community. Instances of discrimination by the KRG had been also reported. The PKK and PMF have prevented Yazidis to return home to Sinjar region.

Step 2: What is the level of risk of persecution?

The individual assessment of whether there is a reasonable degree of likelihood for a Yazidi to face persecution should take into account **risk-impacting circumstances**, such as:

- **Home area**: Yazidis have been prevented from returning to Sinjar both by the PKK and PMF and the security situation in the area remains fragile. Displacement camps constitute sites of heightened risk. As reported in 2021, the living conditions in the KRI camps were difficult and poverty in the camps had worsened, which in turn has led to higher numbers of suicides, domestic violence, and child abandonment. Instances of discrimination by KRG authorities against Yazidis have occurred; however, Yazidis were not recently reported to experience interference in their religious observances.

  The presence of ISIL in the home area could also impact the risk. For the area(s) of presence and activities of ISIL, see 2.4. Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)

- **Gender and family/ community perception:** Women and girls were widely victims of sexual violence by ISIL. Many of those held captive by ISIL fell pregnant as a result of rape, were forcibly married, subjected to trafficking in human beings for the purpose of sexual exploitation and remained highly vulnerable to various forms of exploitation and stigma. Those who refused to leave their children behind are reported to have faced expulsion from the community and also honour killings.

- **Lack of identity documents:** Yazidi women who suffered rape were forced to register their children as Muslim and to convert to Islam themselves in order to obtain identification documents and access to governmental services. For those without identification documents, difficulties accessing government services still persist. See also 3.12.5 Children born under ISIL rule who lack civil documentation.

Step 3: Is there a ground for persecution?

Where well-founded fear of persecution is substantiated for an applicant under this profile, this is highly likely to be for reasons of religion, race and/or nationality as Yazidis are a distinct ethno-religious group. Nationality could be also relevant in case of persecution due to lack of identification documents.



Exclusion considerations could be relevant to this profile as some Yazidis have been members of militias and may have been involved in excludable acts. See 7. Exclusion.

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