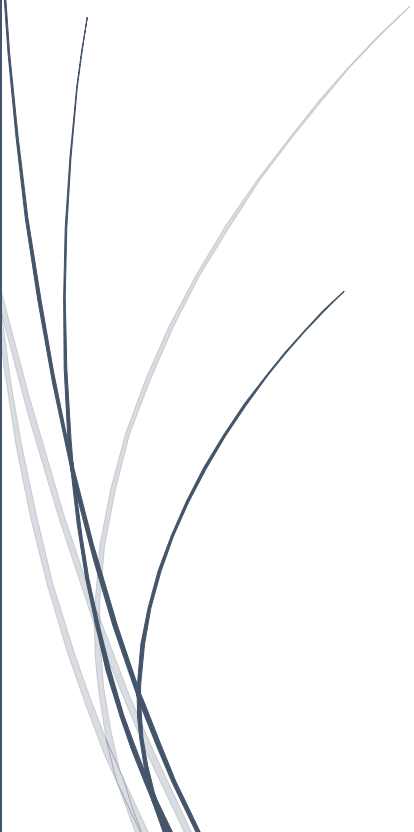




*Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) Remarks at the
Return of the Yezidi Remains Ceremony in Kojo Village.*

*Remarks Given by Dr. Dindar Zebari, the KRG Coordinator
for International Advocacy and Member of the Iraqi National
Cooperation Committee (NCC) to Deal with UNITAD.*

6 February 2021



Kocho's Burial Speech

In addressing the burial oration today, I commence my speech by conveying the greetings of H.E. the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Region to the Yezidi community, and emphasize KRG's solidarity and friendship with the families of the victims.

Dear Yezidi brothers and sisters, and the distinguished guests,

The world has to indulge and comprehend the righteous cry of the Yezidi community to live in peace, to have their children and women protected from extremism, to have their enclaved indigenous area enjoy prosperity and affluence, and to have their political and cultural rights preserved and well represented. It is the very responsibility of the international community, regional and federal governments, organizations and agencies, to consolidate a collective effort in order to ensure the utter fulfillment of these basic rights. We should all push towards this direction, and keep our differences and disagreements at the bay.

Beloved attendees and journalists,

The Iraqis perhaps witnessed the darkest years of this century with encountering the vicious terrorists of ISIL. There are brave soldiers fallen, communities dispersed and displaced, children forced to leave their education, and families faced with persecution and starvation. History will reserve a sincere appreciation for the sparkling role of the President Masoud Barzani for leading the selfless sons of our armed forces of Peshmerga to liberate Shingal. We must gratify and commend Peshmerga forces for their sacrifice and valor in liberating our cities and villages, including Sinjar. Precisely, 1810 martyrs and 10,742 wounded from Peshmerga and the KR armed forces were recorded; dozens also were disappeared during the war.

Dear guests,

We today bid farewell to over 100 of our Yezidi brothers and sisters, all of whom will be buried in their village in Kocho. The remnants have been through the necessary forensic examinations. The process of exhumation will continue thanks to UNITAD and the relevant federal and regional juridical/forensics departments. The Yezidis sacrificed on

behalf of all humanity; hence it is our obligation to endeavor to eradicate the roots of radicalism and extremism in our cultures. KRG's dedicated departments/offices to record and assist Yezidi victims have recorded 3543 rescued (among which 339 men, 1204 women, 956 male children, and 1044 female children). Unfortunately, 2874 Yezidis (1574 men and 1300 women) remain missing and the efforts are ongoing to locate them.

In line with Kurdistan Regional Government continuous efforts to ensure justice and to help UNITAD to bring justice and accountability for crimes committed by Da'esh, the KRG authorities have submitted a large number of witness statements and interview audio recordings of the Yezidi survivors to UNITAD.

KRG Security authorities have also provided a wide range of reports and information in relation to ISIL leadership members, ISIL financing sources and ISIL development of chemical weapons. In addition to lists of ISIL detainees under the custody of KRG security authorities to assist UNITAD's investigations in cross-referencing necessary to access all relevant information in relation to these detainees. As part of the digitization project, the United Nations Investigative Team have been given access to all evidentiary archives in relation to ISIL crimes that have been collected and kept by the KRG authorities.

About 7 years ago, our Yezidi brothers and sisters were brutally massacred and forced to flee their homes. ISIL terrorists launched a fierce attack on a number of areas of the Kurdistan Region, especially the areas inhabited by the Yazidis in Shingal. These terrorists, during their brutal campaign, transcended all human norms and human rights principles towards the innocent populations of the region from killing and demolishing their homes until they reached the point of kidnapping women and children and their families and selling them in both Mosul and Syria. This terrorist attack also led to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of residents of these areas who fled to the Kurdistan Region to preserve their lives and build a mere hope of prosperity.

After the disaster, the Kurdistan Regional Government extended a helping hand in various ways to the displaced without discrimination, which included first securing special places to shelter them, and then securing all necessary primary services such as

water and food. The Council of Ministers of the Kurdistan Region issued its decision No (5170) on 08/21/2014 to form a high committee to define the crimes that perpetrated against the Yezidis as genocide, and the committee has worked over the past years to internationalize the case and tried to echo their agonies to the International Criminal Court. In addition, a special committee was formed to collect information and follow up the file of the kidnappers, and a judicial commission was formed to investigate the crimes committed by the terrorist organization ISIS in the Sinjar region and other surrounding areas, documenting these crimes and recording statements. And in this cabinet, the Genocide Committee has been formed to resume the tasks of the other committees.

On the other hand, a treatment, support and rehabilitation center for women survivors of ISIS was opened in Dohuk and (50) awareness centers to provide health and psychological services in the camps, in addition to establishing a center in Erbil to rehabilitate released women by the Directorate of Yazidi Affairs in the Ministry of Endowments and the Kurdistan Regional Parliament voted to consider what the Yazidis were subjected to as a "genocide".

Yezidis became the subject of the terrorists' hatred and brutality due to their Kurdish identity, religion, and beliefs. ISIL's extremism marked another heinous persecution from a long series of persecutions throughout their history. Yezidi women have been subjected to many brutal behaviors that are far from all other human means and norms followed, starting from buying and selling, physical and psychological torture, and religion conversion, to cases of exposure to the crime of sexual assault. Most of the women who were rescued from the hands of ISIL terrorists have suffered from severe psychological and physical conditions. A number of these women survivors had to leave their children with ISIL, which led to a further deterioration of their health conditions.

What can be secured in favor of the voluntary, dignified, and safe return of the displaced and immigrants from the Yezidis and other Iraqis who were forced by war circumstances to emigrate due to the terrorist aggressions and the threats they were exposed to, is the need to overcome political and administrative obstacles that prevent justice for the victims' families, and accelerate the formation of the administration in Sinjar, enhancing security and stability and providing material aid and basic services for

their return from displacement camps to their indigenous homeland. In prospect, these steps can only be accomplished by the swift and actual implementation of the Shingal Agreement.

The genocide that affected Sinjar district and its surroundings represents one of the most heinous crimes against humanity in modern history, and was part of a large-scale attack launched by ISIL terrorists against the people of Kurdistan. What happened in Sinjar is a catastrophe that shook the depths of our conscience and expressed the criminalized approach of this organization and its bloody ideology. Efforts must be intensified at home and abroad in order to define it as a crime of genocide and to find and return the abductees.

However, the Yazidis, despite all the tragedies, are still committed to defending their culture and religion. This is a commendable signal and illustrates their determination to preserve their identity. We remember the victims and the martyrs by heart. May their souls rest in peace.

Thanks for your presence.