

## **Standing in Solidarity with the Yezidi Community**

April 7, 2015

Making sense of our world is not easy. Making sense of the incessant conflict, senseless violence, and inequality around us is even harder. Yet, even in this complex world, understanding the tragedy that has befallen the Yezidis is incomprehensible.

The slaughter and enslavement of the Yezidis, an ancient and peaceful religious community in the heart of the Middle East, challenges all basic conceptions of humanity. The abhorrent barbarity of Daesh (aka ISIS) that has led to the systematic destruction of cultural and religious sites, slavery, forced displacement, and the wanton massacre of Yezidis is not a contention for resources or a simple conflict. It is a genocide driven by apocalyptic beliefs. It is a religious cleansing driven by an ideology that is intolerant of pluralism and intent on eradicating the history and culture of an entire people and their ancestral land.

Their plight is reminiscent of that fate that confronted Kashmiri Hindus 25 years ago, when their presence in the Kashmir Valley, where they had been living for thousands of years, was virtually erased. Similar to the Yezidis, nearly 400,000 Hindus were ethnically cleansed from their home in Kashmir and subjected to an orchestrated campaign of terror that involved systematic executions, threats of violence, rapes, and forced conversions. The continued existence of squalid refugee camps that house displaced Kashmiri Hindus struggling to survive and unable to return home, is a reminder of the cost of inaction and silence.

As an organization that actively works towards the promotion of human dignity, mutual respect, and pluralism, the Hindu American Foundation (HAF) cannot tolerate the suffering of the Yezidis in silence. That is why HAF joined with the International Religious Freedom Roundtable in Washington, D.C. to host a Yezidi delegation from Iraq in November, 2014 and advocated on their behalf on Capitol Hill. We stand in solidarity with the Yezidi community and are committed to continuing to raise awareness about their plight amongst our elected officials and the international community.

It is incumbent upon all of us, regardless of race, religion, or nationality to come together to speak with one voice and urgently act in order to save the Yezidis from further tragedy before its too late.