

The Honourable John McCallum, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship
365 Laurier Avenue West
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 1L1
Nov. 15, 2015

Hon. John McCallum,
Re: Prioritizing Yazidi refugees

We are members of various organizations who are deeply concerned with the ongoing persecution of the Yazidis in Syria and Northern Iraq.

The Yazidis are an ethno-religious minority with a history of several thousands of years in northern Iraq and Kurdistan (Mesopotamia). The Yazidis have been targeted primarily for their religion by Islamic radicals for the last 14 centuries. The latest attack against them, conducted by ISIS on Mt Sinjar in September 2014, was the most devastating attack they endured. This attack resulted in death, rape, slavery and the indoctrination of thousands of Yazidi children by ISIS. The surviving victims were displaced and living in refugee camps in Turkey and in Iraq.

Various non profit charitable organizations have partnered together to raise awareness for the plight of the Yazidis and help sponsor Yazidi refugees to Canada. Volunteers have worked tirelessly to raise funds to sponsor Yazidi refugees and to provide them with hope of a secure future with freedom and democratic values entrenched.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and the Liberal Government intend to fulfill their campaign promises and welcome 25 000 Syrian refugees into Canada by Jan 1, 2016. As Canadians, we acknowledge the need to accept refugees from war torn countries especially religious minorities who face the threat of persecution and genocide.

Many genocide scholars perceive the Yazidis as victims of genocide. According to genocide scholar and University of Manitoba professor, Adam Muller, "The United Nations defines genocide as the attempt to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group," and measured by any yardstick this is exactly what IS is doing in Iraq and Syria." (1) Furthermore, a recent report by the U.S Holocaust Memorial Museum concludes that, "Islamic State has been and is perpetrating genocide against the Yazidi people." (2)

We urge the government to prioritize the Yazidis refugees from Northern Iraq and Syria. Yazidis are the most vulnerable religious minority and they should receive priority over others. According to Dr. A Muller, it is important to note that the Yazidis "are a relatively isolated religious community with limited cultural and other links to populations elsewhere capable of providing material support and advocating on their behalf." (1)

We strongly believe that Canada will greatly benefit from resettlement of the Yazidi people, as they will enrich Canadian society for generations to come, the way other religious minorities have.

Holocaust survivor, Elie Wiesel stated that, "A destruction, an annihilation that only man can provoke, only man can prevent." We believe that it is imperative to prioritize the Yazidi refugees in order to foster a semblance of hope in - humanity and prevent their destruction and annihilation.

We trust that the government of Canada will foster hope where hope has vanished.

We await your response.

Sincerely,