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CANADA

Report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration

ROAD TO RECOVERY: RESETTLEMENT ISSUES OF YAZIDI WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN CANADA



Chair
Robert Oliphant

MARCH 2018

42nd PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

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OF YAZIDI WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN CANADA**

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Citizenship and Immigration**

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NOTICE TO READER

Reports from committee presented to the House of Commons

Presenting a report to the House is the way a committee makes public its findings and recommendations on a particular topic. Substantive reports on a subject-matter study usually contain a synopsis of the testimony heard, the recommendations made by the committee, as well as the reasons for those recommendations.

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THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

has the honour to present its

EIGHTEENTH REPORT

Pursuant to its mandate under Standing Order 108(2), the Committee has held briefings on resettlement issues related to Yazidi women and girls and has agreed to report the following:

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SUMMARY

In August 2014, Daesh launched an attack across the Sinjar region of Northern Iraq. The area is primarily inhabited by the Yazidi people, a long-established ethnic and religious minority group condemned by Daesh because of their beliefs. The atrocities reported from the region included the removal and murder of Yazidi men, the sexual slavery of Yazidi women and girls, and the incorporation of Yazidi boys into Daesh fighting groups. Canada and other members of the international community mobilized to support those who fled within Iraq and to neighbouring countries. The House of Commons passed a motion in 2016 calling on the Government of Canada to provide asylum to Yazidi women and girls, the most vulnerable victims of the 2014 attack. The ensuing initiative saw more than 1,000 Yazidis resettled in Canada within the past year.

One year after their arrival in Canada, lessons can be learned about their resettlement experience, especially in regards to resettlement locations as well as housing and financial needs. The resettling of Yazidi women and children in Canada is a first step to rebuilding their lives. However, a number of critical support services such as better access to mental health support and interpretation services are needed in order to fully integrate. The road to recovery for survivors of Daesh also includes reuniting with family members who were left behind.

On 16 October 2017, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration decided to request an update on the resettlement issues faced by Yazidi women and girls in Canada. The Committee met with representatives of government departments, settlement agencies, refugee sponsors and newly arrived Yazidi women and children. This report provides a number of recommendations based on the issues heard during the course of the study. Among these, the Committee would like to highlight the importance of increasing Canada's refugee resettlement targets and facilitating the private sponsorship of Yazidi women and children. The Committee also recommends developing a best practices guide on resettlement and integration of vulnerable groups as well as anticipating linguistic capacity needs in order to provide professional interpretation to newcomers in their mother tongue.

Resettlement initiatives are not the only solution to the violent displacement endured by the Yazidi people. Stabilizing the Sinjar region and creating a favourable environment for those wishing to return is also part of rebuilding the lives of Yazidis. The Government of Canada, through its Middle East strategy, is providing humanitarian assistance and international security to the region in the hopes of seeing it prosper in the near future.

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of their deliberations, committees may make recommendations which they include in their reports for the consideration of the House of Commons or the Government. Recommendations related to this study are listed below.

Increasing Refugee Resettlement Targets

Recommendation 1

That the Government of Canada increase its refugee resettlement targets..... 14

Facilitating Private Sponsorship

Recommendation 2

That Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada work with stakeholders to facilitate the private sponsorship of Yazidi women and children; and deem these applications over and above the Sponsorship Agreement Holders' allocations until 2020. 16

Facilitating a Favourable Environment for Return

Recommendation 3

That the Government of Canada work with multilateral partners to help internally displaced Yazidi persons return to their region by working towards creating a favourable environment for return in Northern Iraq..... 19

Building a Cohesive Community

Recommendation 4

That Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada offer newly arrived Yazidi women and children information about existing Yazidi communities in Canada to help build a supportive Canadian network of Yazidi people; and facilitate the resettlement of Yazidi women and children in areas with existing Yazidi communities to assist with their integration. 24

Strengthening Services

Recommendation 5

That Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada continue to support settlement service providers assisting Yazidi women and children in developing shared capacity and best practices particularly within the five relocation areas, namely London, Toronto, Winnipeg, Calgary and Lethbridge. 25

Developing Best Practices for the Resettlement of Vulnerable Groups

Recommendation 6

That Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada work with relevant stakeholders and experts on the development of a best practices guide for the settlement sector on the resettlement and integration of vulnerable groups. 25

Ensuring Proximity to Services and Housing which is Affordable

Recommendation 7

That the Government of Canada recognize that resettled Yazidi women and children do not necessarily have the knowledge, ability or resources to access services on their own and should assist them in relocating to areas that are in close proximity to services, such as public transportation, educational and medical centres as well as settlement services; and work with provincial and municipal governments as well as service provider organizations to ensure resettled Yazidi women and children have improved access to housing which is affordable. 28

Improving Mental Health Support and Access

Recommendation 8

That the Government of Canada work with provincial and territorial governments, the Mental Health Commission of Canada and all relevant partners to invest in improving mental health support for all refugees resettled in Canada; and work to improve access to mental health support for Yazidi women and children in their mother tongue when accessing services through the Interim Federal Health Program. 34

Anticipating Interpreting Needs

Recommendation 9

That Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada anticipate linguistic capacity needs in its resettlement initiatives and provide professional interpretation to newcomers in their mother tongue..... 37

Developing Community Interpreting

Recommendation 10

That Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada work with provincial, territorial and municipal governments, as well as professional associations in the areas of interpretation and translation, to develop the capacity of community interpreting and to ensure that professional interpretation is provided to newcomers to Canada who are in need of this service..... 38

Encourage Language Acquisition

Recommendation 11

That Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada continue its support of language training for all refugees..... 40

Supporting Family Reunification

Recommendation 12

That Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada support family reunification for survivors of Daesh by considering extending indefinitely the One-Year Window of Opportunity for them to include immediate family members found to be living; and continue to expedite the applications of immediate family members. 42



ROAD TO RECOVERY: RESETTLEMENT ISSUES OF YAZIDI WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN CANADA

PREFACE

On 16 October 2017, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration (hereafter referred to as the “Committee”) adopted a motion to study resettlement issues related to Yazidi women and girls.¹ The Committee decided to hold four meetings on the topic.²

From 7 November to 5 December 2017, the Committee heard from 29 witnesses and received 13 written submissions.³ The Committee wishes to thank all the witnesses who appeared or contributed to this study, in particular the individuals who shared their personal stories of struggle.

INTRODUCTION

The Yazidi (also spelled Yezidi) population is an ethnic and religious minority of around 700,000 individuals who speak Kurmanji, of whom 400,000 to 500,000 are concentrated in the Sinjar region of Northern Iraq.⁴ This minority group was targeted and persecuted for its beliefs and practices by Daesh⁵ in 2014. Following the August 2014 attack of Yazidis in the Sinjar region by Daesh, nearly 200,000 were displaced throughout Iraq or fled to Lebanon, Syria or Turkey.⁶ From January 2014 to May 2015, the Government of Canada resettled only 3 Yazidi cases, according to an audit by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC).⁷ On 25 October 2016, the House of Commons passed the following motion:

-
- 1 House of Commons Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration [CIMM], *Minutes of Proceedings*, 16 October 2017.
 - 2 CIMM, *Minutes of Proceedings*, 20 November 2017.
 - 3 CIMM, *Briefing on Resettlement Issues Related to Yazidi Women and Girls*.
 - 4 United Nations Human Rights Council [UNHRC], *“They came to destroy”: ISIS Crimes Against the Yazidis*, A/HRC/32/CRP.2, 15 June 2016, p. 33.
 - 5 Also called the “Islamic State,” “IS,” “ISIS” or “ISIL.”
 - 6 UNHRC, *“They came to destroy”: ISIS Crimes Against the Yazidis*, A/HRC/32/CRP.2, 15 June 2016, p. 33.
 - 7 Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), *Written Response*, “Marwan Tabbara-2017-11-07.”



That the House (a) recognize that ISIS is committing genocide against the Yazidi people; (b) acknowledge that many Yazidi women and girls are still being held captive by ISIS as sexual slaves; (c) support recommendations found in the June 15, 2016, report issued by the United Nations Commission of Inquiry on Syria entitled, “They came to destroy: ISIS Crimes Against the Yazidis”; and (d) call on the government to (i) take immediate action upon all the recommendations found in sections 210, 212, and 213 of the said report, (ii) provide asylum to Yazidi women and girls within 120 days.⁸

On 21 February 2017, the Government of Canada announced its plan to resettle 1,200 survivors of Daesh, including Yazidi women and girls, by the end of 2017.⁹ As of 29 October 2017, 807 survivors had arrived in Canada. Of these 807 individuals, 81% are Yazidi, 28% are women, 22% are men and 49% are children.¹⁰

This report focuses on the Yazidi resettlement experience in Canada. The persecution of Yazidis abroad and the actions Canada could take were discussed by the Committee during the summer and fall of 2016.¹¹ The first two sections of this report revisit the need for resettling persecuted Yazidis to Canada as well as Canada’s multifaceted response. The third section of the report discusses the resettlement issues encountered by the resettled Yazidi community. In particular, the Committee heard testimony regarding areas of relocation of resettled Yazidis, housing and financial needs, health care needs, interpretation services and language acquisition. The report concludes with a section on the need for further family reunification opportunities for these resettled Yazidi women and children in order for them to rebuild their lives in Canada.

RESETTLING PERSECUTED YAZIDIS TO CANADA

A. Persecution and Vulnerability

The Committee heard from numerous witnesses about the persecution experienced by the Yazidi people, particularly with respect to the crimes committed by Daesh in

8 House of Commons, 42nd Parliament, 1st Session, *Journals*, No. 97, Tuesday, 25 October 2016.

9 IRCC, “[Canada to welcome 1200 Yazidi and other survivors of Daesh](#),” News Release, 21 February 2017; Department of Finance, [#Budget 2017: Building a Strong Middle Class](#), Ottawa, 22 March 2017, p. 184.

10 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 7 November 2017, 0850 (Dawn Edlund, Associate Assistant Deputy Minister, Operations, Department of Citizenship and Immigration).

11 CIMM, [Immigration Measures for the Protection of Vulnerable Groups](#); CIMM, [Resettling Yazidi Girls and Women](#).

August 2014.¹² The report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, referred to in the 25 October 2016 House of Commons motion, thoroughly details the persecution of Yazidis in Northern Iraq and provides a legal basis for classifying the acts of Daesh as genocide. The Commission determined that Daesh was responsible for, among other prohibited acts, killing members of a protected group, imposing measures intended to prevent births within the Yazidi community, and forcibly transferring Yazidi children to another group. It further determined that there was intent to destroy, in whole or in part, the Yazidis of Sinjar and that, consequently, the crime of genocide had been committed.¹³

Among the Commission's list of recommendations were those specific to displaced Yazidis, including the need to accelerate the processing of asylum applications and the need to ensure that "Yazidi victims of genocide, including but not limited to sexual violence, are identified and treated as a vulnerable group for the purposes of housing, psychosocial support, and with regard to the asylum process."¹⁴ Officials representing IRCC provided the Committee with details about how these recommendations were addressed by Canada.

Dawn Edlund, Associate Assistant Deputy Minister of Operations at IRCC, explained that Canada offers protection to displaced individuals on the basis of vulnerability, rather than particular religious or ethnic background. For this reason, the Government of Canada's response to the 25 October 2016 House of Commons motion focused on all survivors of Daesh for whom resettlement would be an appropriate solution.¹⁵

Ms. Edlund stated that IRCC worked closely with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Organization for Migration, and other partners to meet its Yazidi resettlement commitment. She stated that the UNHCR has been a key partner for IRCC in selecting individuals to resettle under the Yazidi initiative and that the organization "stepped out of its normal role in relation to this operation to do referrals of internally displaced persons as opposed to resettling refugees itself."¹⁶

12 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 9 November 2017, 0905 (Dalal Abdallah, Yazidi Human Rights Activist, Yazda); CIMM, [Evidence](#), 9 November 2017, 0940 (Hadji Hesso, Director, Yazidi Association of Manitoba); CIMM, [Evidence](#), 9 November 2017, 1015 (Matthew Travis Barber, as an individual); CIMM, [Evidence](#), 9 November 2017, 1020 (Mirza Ismail, Founder and President, Canada Section, Yazidi Human Rights Organization-International); CIMM, [Evidence](#), 30 November 2017, 0935 (Shannon Smith, as an individual); Haifa Tawfiq, [Written submission](#), p. 3; Natalie Boldt, [Written submission](#), p. 3.

13 UNHRC, ["They came to destroy": ISIS Crimes Against the Yazidis](#), A/HRC/32/CRP.2, 15 June 2016, p. 31.

14 Ibid., p. 39.

15 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 7 November 2017, 0850 (Dawn Edlund).

16 Ibid., 0925 (Dawn Edlund).



She explained that the UNHCR in Northern Iraq worked with “the local government, the regional health authority, NGOs [non-governmental organizations], and Yazda [a multinational Yazidi organization], etc., to identify the individuals and refer them to us.”¹⁷ Thus, Iraqi and Canadian NGOs submitted names of potential applicants to the UNHCR who then conducted an assessment based on criteria established by Canada. The said criteria specified a prioritization of cases based on the following:

- Women and girls at risk;
- Accompanied children and dependants;
- LGBTI individuals;
- Single women or single parents;
- Cases with family in Canada;
- Elderly persons; and
- Persons with disabilities or specific medical needs.¹⁸

In view of that partnership, IRCC earmarked for 2017 \$4.5 million specifically for UNHCR’s operational activities in Iraq.¹⁹

Jean-Nicolas Beuze, Representative in Canada of the Office of the UNHCR, thanked the Government of Canada for the opportunity to relocate the most vulnerable survivors of Daesh. He explained that the organization’s process of selection focuses on individual vulnerability. Mr. Beuze indicated that the UNHCR’s consideration of an individual’s need for protection is not dependent on whether or not the individual was specifically persecuted as part of genocide, but related rather to the existence of such persecution and a corresponding need for protection of that individual.²⁰ Lobat Sadrehashemi, refugee lawyer, supported the UNHCR’s approach to protection by explaining that without an objective criteria, selection of protected persons risked becoming “arbitrary and fraught.”²¹

17 Ibid., 0910.

18 IRCC, *Written Response*, “Michelle Rempel-7-2017-11-07.”

19 Jean-Nicolas Beuze, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], *Letter*, 28 November 2017.

20 CIMM, *Evidence*, 7 November 2017, 1020 (Jean-Nicolas Beuze, Representative in Canada, UNHCR).

21 CIMM, *Evidence*, 5 December 2017, 0955 (Lobat Sadrehashemi, Lawyer, as an individual).

Certain witnesses critiqued the approach of not considering the qualification of genocide alone as determinative to the selection of Yazidis for resettlement to Canada. Gary Rose, Director of Communications for Project Abraham at the Mozuud Freedom Foundation, stated that “the UNHCR is ignoring its mandate as required by the 1948 Geneva Convention by having a stated policy that disregards and contradicts the policy of the Government of Canada on the genocide of the Yazidis.”²² Among the recommendations made to the Committee by Project Abraham was that Canada should “prioritize genocide as a criterion for selecting refugees to resettle in Canada, and therefore work outside of the UNHCR, which has stated it does not use genocide as a criterion, directly contravening both the UN [United Nations] and the GOC [Government of Canada] mandate.”²³

Another issue raised with respect to the UNHCR was the length of time it took to process applications. Dalal Abdallah, a Yazidi Human Rights activist at Yazda, stated that she believed “that Yazidis are lost in the UN at times” and that a program needed to be created “that is dedicated directly for Yazidis.”²⁴ As such, some witnesses agreed that an alternative process to partnering with the UNHCR for selecting Yazidis should be sought.²⁵

The result of the focus of IRCC on survivors of Daesh and of its reliance on the UNHCR was that, as of 29 October 2017, 80% of resettled individuals to Canada under the Yazidi resettlement initiative identified themselves as Yazidi. Of the 80% that identified as Yazidi (650), 79% are women and children.²⁶ Ms. Edlund also informed the Committee that a total of 1,383 survivors of Daesh have been identified to IRCC and that 1,200 will be resettled in Canada by the end of 2017 with the remaining in early 2018.²⁷ Thus, while IRCC did not outright include the Yazidi genocide as a criterion, by focusing on survivors of Daesh, the department responded to the recommendations of the report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic pertaining to displaced Yazidis.

22 CIMM, *Evidence*, 5 December 2017, 0925 (Gary Rose, Director of Communications, Project Abraham, Mozuud Freedom Foundation).

23 CIMM, *Evidence*, 5 December 2017, 0920 (Debbie Rose, Manager, Project Abraham, Mozuud Freedom Foundation).

24 CIMM, *Evidence*, 9 November 2017, 0925 (Dalal Abdallah).

25 CIMM, *Evidence*, 9 November 2017, 0925 (Hadji Hesso); CIMM, *Evidence*, 9 November 2017, 0925 (Dalal Abdallah); CIMM, *Evidence*, 9 November 2017, 0925 (Nafiya Naso, Working Committee Member, Operation Ezra); Yazda, *Written submission*, p. 3.

26 CIMM, *Evidence*, 7 November 2017, 0910 (Dawn Edlund).

27 Ibid., 0925.



B. Canada's Resettlement Initiative: One Year After

The issue of whether Canada should commit to resettling more survivors of Daesh, or, more specifically, Yazidi women and children, was raised by several witnesses. Opinions varied with respect to potential resettlement numbers and the manner in which Yazidis should be resettled.

Ms. Abdallah stressed that “[resettlement of Yazidis] is very urgent for Canada.”²⁸ She suggested to the Committee that the target number of 1,200 Yazidis should be doubled, stating that “thousands of girls, boys and men are being killed.”²⁹

Omar Khoudeida, an activist in the Yazidi community in London, Ontario, expressed the opinion that a special measure for additional resettlement of Yazidi women and children to Canada was necessary given that some have been in refugee camps for three years and that Yazidis arriving in Canada have inquired as to whether more will be taken in, specifically more family members.³⁰ One Free World International recommended in a written submission that Canada resettle an additional 3,000 Yazidis in 2018, highlighting the fact that “[t]ens of thousands of Yazidis remain in refugee camps and more are displaced living in makeshift communities on the fringes of an already war-torn society.”³¹ This recommendation was echoed by Natalie Boldt in her written submission.³²

Nadia Murad Basee Taha, President of the Nadia Murad Initiative at Yazda, voiced her support for extending the Yazidi resettlement initiative to an additional 5,000 people as a special measure beyond the 7,500 overall allotted government assisted refugee numbers for 2018, highlighting that increasing the number would provide “tremendous support” to Yazidis.³³ Debbie Rose, Manager, Project Abraham at the Mozuud Freedom Foundation, stated that an additional 5,000 would be “a good start”³⁴ and that at least another 5,000 Yazidis should be brought to Canada under the Government-Assisted Refugees Program.³⁵ Several other witnesses agreed with the importance of resettling

28 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 9 November 2017, 0925 (Dalal Abdallah).

29 Ibid.

30 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 30 November 2017, 935 (Omar Khoudeida, as an individual).

31 One Free World International, [Written submission](#), p. 3.

32 Natalie Boldt, [Written submission](#), p. 3.

33 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 9 November 2017, 1040 (Nadia Murad Basee Taha, President, Nadia Murad Initiative, Yazda).

34 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 5 December 2017, 0950 (Debbie Rose).

35 Mozuud RSVP, [Written submission](#), p. 6.

an additional 5,000 Yazidis.³⁶ Advocating for higher numbers, Mirza Ismail, Founder and President of the Canadian section of Yazidi Human Rights Organization-International, stated that the special case of genocide warranted Canada resettling an additional 20,000 Yazidis over the next three years.³⁷

When discussing resettlement, some witnesses focused less on a specific number and more on the importance that any special resettlement measures be considered above the 7,500 overall allotted refugee numbers for 2018. Shauna Labman, Assistant Professor at the University of Manitoba explained that initiatives that target certain groups should be considered “above and beyond our current resettlement quotas or targets and ambitions.”³⁸ She further explained that resettlement of a particular group of individuals, outside of the government planned resettlement efforts, is based on public interest and particularized protection needs and “should be a differential category.”³⁹

Ms. Sadrehashemi reminded the Committee of the current global refugee crisis and stated that, as a wealthy nation, Canada needs to respond by increasing its overall resettlement numbers.⁴⁰ She supported Prof. Labman’s view with respect to special initiatives, stating that such initiatives “should not be carved out of Canada’s targets that have already been set by the government for resettlement.”⁴¹

Mr. Beuze stated that the situation of the Yazidis was constantly evolving and that it is difficult to determine at the present time whether a similar Yazidi resettlement initiative will be required.⁴² Given the magnitude of the global refugee crisis, Mr. Beuze pointed out that he was unsure whether the prioritization of Yazidis will necessarily lead to “the relocation of an additional number of survivors of Daesh.”⁴³ He further explained that the UNHCR’s immediate concern is “the fact that we have 4.2 million displaced persons in Iraq, we have more than 250,000 Syrian refugees in Iraq as we speak, and we have

36 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 9 November 2017, 0935 (Nafiya Naso); CIMM, [Evidence](#), 9 November 2017, 0935 (Lorne Weiss, Working Committee Member, Operation Ezra); CIMM, [Evidence](#), 9 November 2017, 0925 (Hadji Hesso).

37 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 9 November 2017, 1040 (Mirza Ismail).

38 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 30 November 2017, 1020 (Shauna Labman, Assistant Professor, University of Manitoba, as an individual).

39 Ibid.

40 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 5 December 2017, 0910 (Lobat Sadrehashemi).

41 Ibid., 0905.

42 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 7 November 2017, 1020 (Jean-Nicolas Beuze).

43 Ibid., 1000.



only one-fifth of the money required to help them.”⁴⁴ Mr. Beuze noted that, for the UNHCR, rather than focusing on a particular country of origin or ethnic group, “the needs of those 1.2 million people already identified in our database and who need resettlement” should be prioritized and that space be kept for “all of the refugees whose need is a matter of survival.”⁴⁵

The Canadian Council for Refugees expressed concern over what it termed the politicization of Canadian resettlement programs. The organization explained that a resettlement program that targets a specific group risks compromising equitable treatment and stressed that “we should not be using religion, ethnicity or membership in a social group to decide in favour of one [individual] over the other.”⁴⁶ The organization further noted that it regretted Canada “trying to force a bias in referrals from UNHCR” and that Canada should allow the UNHCR to take the lead in determining which vulnerable individuals should be resettled to Canada.⁴⁷

The Committee acknowledges the existence of a global refugee crisis with 22 million⁴⁸ refugees, of which 1.2 million are identified by the UNHCR as needing urgent resettlement. Given the number of worldwide refugees and given the vulnerability of Yazidi women and children, the Committee recommends:

Increasing Refugee Resettlement Targets

Recommendation 1

That the Government of Canada increase its refugee resettlement targets.

C. Need for Private Sponsorship

Canada resettles refugees through the Government-Assisted Refugees (GAR) Program, the Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) Program, and the relatively-new Blended Visa-Officer Referred (BVOR) Program.⁴⁹ The Committee heard from a number of

44 Ibid.

45 Ibid.

46 Canadian Council for Refugees, *Written submission*, p. 1.

47 Ibid., p. 2.

48 CIMM, *Evidence*, 7 November 2017, 1000 (Jean-Nicolas Beuze).

49 The [Blended Visa Office-Referred Program](#) is a separate stream where the Government of Canada and private sponsors work together to support the resettlement of a refugee. The UNHCR identifies the refugees that can be sponsored under this program.

witnesses advocating for resettling Yazidis to Canada by using the private sponsorship stream. Indeed, of the 650 Yazidis resettled through the federal government's initiative, 91% were government-assisted refugees and 9% were privately sponsor refugees.⁵⁰ As opposed to GARs, PSRs are supported by individual Canadians for the length of their one-year sponsorship, which includes housing, social and financial support. PSRs can also be sponsored by

- Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAH): groups that have signed agreements with the Government of Canada;
- Constituent Groups (CGs): A SAH can authorize CGs to sponsor under its agreement and provide support to the refugees;
- Groups of Five (G5): five or more Canadian citizens or permanent residents;
- Community Sponsors (CSs): an organization, association or corporation;
- Joint Assistance Sponsorship (JAS): organizations partner with the Canadian government to resettle refugees with special needs.

Witnesses discussed the merits of raising or removing restrictions on private sponsorship in the context of Yazidi resettlement. Of note, the immigration levels plan released for 2018 set the number of PSRs at 18,000,⁵¹ which is an increase from the 4,560 PSRs resettled in 2014.⁵² Lorne Weiss, Working Committee Member of Operation Ezra, explained that his organization is seeking more SAHs with higher quotas in cities with larger Yazidi communities.⁵³ In a written submission to the Committee, Operation Ezra also recommended that more SAHs should be awarded to groups with a history of sponsoring Yazidi refugees.⁵⁴ A separate written submission by Haifa Tawfiq suggested that Canada should encourage and support the PSR Program by lifting the cap on private sponsorship. In addition, quotas should be increased in order to allow more private

50 CIMM, *Evidence*, 7 November 2017, 0850 (Dawn Edlund). IRCC informed the Committee that, as of 19 November 2017, there were 284 privately-sponsored refugee cases pending in Iraq. However, none of the individuals have been identified by sponsors as Yazidi and, therefore, were not included as part of the resettlement initiative. IRCC, *Written response*, "Michelle Rempel-4-2017-11-07."

51 IRCC, "[Notice – Supplementary Information 2018-2020 Immigration Levels Plan](#)," Ottawa, 1 November 2017.

52 IRCC, *Annual Report to Parliament on Immigration, 2015*.

53 CIMM, *Evidence*, 9 November 2017, 0850 (Lorne Weiss).

54 Operation Ezra, *Written submission*, p. 3.



organizations to sponsor more refugees.⁵⁵ When asked by the Committee whether the cap on PSRs should be lifted, five witnesses also expressed their approval.⁵⁶

However, Mr. Weiss qualified his approval for lifting the cap on PSRs with a note of caution. He explained that growth in PSR numbers would be “self-monitoring” and tied to the ability to raise funds and stated that he “would hate to see [Yazidi] compete for private sponsorship with groups that are more well-established and that have more funds” for private sponsorship.⁵⁷ Accordingly, Mr. Weiss suggested that it should be recognized that certain groups would require preferential treatment.⁵⁸

Prof. Labman praised the work of private organizations mobilizing to aid with resettlement, but voiced concern with what she termed an ad hoc privatization of settlement services and their gap-filling role.⁵⁹ She explained that increased dependence on private organizations risks creating differential treatment between GARs and PSRs and noted that the projection for immigration levels for the next three years sees private sponsorship numbers more than double those for GARs. Prof. Labman stressed the importance of considering the impact this might have on the “gap-filling capacity of private Canadians” and warned that aspects related to location and strength of a private organization must not become factors in the determination of government support.⁶⁰

The Committee recommends:

Facilitating Private Sponsorship

Recommendation 2

That Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada work with stakeholders to facilitate the private sponsorship of Yazidi women and children; and deem these applications over and above the Sponsorship Agreement Holders’ allocations until 2020.

55 Haifa Tawfiq, [Written submission](#), p. 7.

56 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 9 November 2017, 0925 (Dalal Abdallah); CIMM, [Evidence](#), 30 November 2017, 0930 (Omar Khoudeida); CIMM, [Evidence](#), 30 November 2017, 0930 (Shannon Smith); CIMM, [Evidence](#), 9 November 2017, 0930 (Hadji Hesso); CIMM, [Evidence](#), 9 November 2017, 0930 (Nafiya Naso, Working Committee Member, Operation Ezra).

57 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 9 November 2017, 0930 (Lorne Weiss).

58 Ibid.

59 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 30 November 2017, 1000 (Shauna Labman).

60 Ibid.

CANADA'S MULTIFACETED RESPONSE

Witnesses familiar with humanitarian crises advised that there is rarely a single solution to a situation such as the one faced by the Yazidi people in Northern Iraq. Resettlement might be the preferred solution for one segment of the population, while return to homes in Iraq could be the better option for others. Although the purpose of the Committee's hearings was to receive an update on the resettlement of Yazidi women and children, witnesses warned that resettlement initiatives need to be accompanied by continued humanitarian aid to Northern Iraq. Matthew Travis Barber, a doctoral student at the University of Chicago studying the Yazidi people, further stressed the importance of the spiritual centre of the Yazidi religion remaining in Iraq. Mr. Barber stated that the stability of the Yazidi homeland in Iraq is not only paramount for those remaining there; it is an important aspect for Yazidis resettling in Canada as well.⁶¹ The manner in which Canada approaches its humanitarian aid and resettlement of Yazidis not only has an impact on the individuals involved, but on the resilience of Yazidis as a group and on the Yazidi religion.

Mr. Barber described the emigration of Yazidis from Iraq as a "double-edged sword," noting that resettlement offers both advantages and risks to the Yazidi community and stressing the need for strategies to be developed to aid the group as a whole over the long run.⁶² Thus, Mr. Barber recommends that resettlement initiatives occur in tandem with efforts aiding Yazidis that have remained in Sinjar, Iraq.⁶³ Mr. Barber explained that Yazidi opinions appear divided on the merits of resettlement; some feeling there is no future in Iraq and others believing that their homeland is worth fighting for. Payam Akhavan, Associate Professor at the Faculty of Law of McGill University, commented that "virtually all of the people I spoke with did not want to leave Iraq to become refugees in other countries" and further emphasized that "I heard time and again that people wanted to go back to their homes."⁶⁴ Nevertheless, Mr. Barber stated that a "comprehensive response to the Yazidi Genocide can respect the opinions of Yazidis on both sides of the emigration issue and can likewise provide robust assistance that addresses the needs of both groups."⁶⁵

61 Matthew Travis Barber, *Written submission*, p. 1.

62 Ibid.

63 CIMM, *Evidence*, 9 November 2017, 1015 (Matthew Travis Barber).

64 CIMM, *Evidence*, 9 November 2017, 0955 (Payam Akhavan, Associate Professor, Faculty of Law, McGill University, as an individual).

65 Matthew Travis Barber, *Written submission*, p. 4.



The need for continued humanitarian aid in Iraq was underlined by Mr. Ismail. He requested that the Canadian government intervene to liberate Yazidi women and children still being held by Daesh and that Canada urgently send humanitarian aid to internally displaced persons in Iraq.⁶⁶ Haider Elias, President of Yazda, suggested that the Canadian government support local NGOs in Sinjar in their efforts to rebuild communities.⁶⁷ Finally, Prof. Akhavan added that “it's time to start thinking about reconstruction efforts so that [internally displaced people (IDPs)] can go back to their towns and villages where security circumstances permit.”⁶⁸

Since the 25 October 2016 motion in the House of Commons, Canada has been addressing the Yazidi issue on two fronts. Sean Boyd, Executive Director, Middle East Relations at Global Affairs Canada, explained that, in addition to Canada's Yazidi resettlement program, the federal government is also assisting Yazidis who remain in Iraq. He detailed the country's current involvement in Iraq to the Committee by explaining that “[t]hrough multi-year programming under Canada's Middle East strategy, we are providing over \$150 million in humanitarian assistance to Iraq to meet the needs of the most vulnerable, including the Yazidis.”⁶⁹

Mr. Boyd further explained that Canada is funding the removal of unexploded ordnance and improvised explosive devices from Northern Iraq and is supporting “community-level dispute resolution and reconciliation initiatives” to facilitate the return of IDPs to their homes.⁷⁰ Canada is also supporting anti-retribution campaigns as well as institutions addressing property and land disputes in Northern Iraq. Finally, the federal government has also been contributing to community policing in Iraq. Mr. Boyd explained that Canada is focusing on the development of civilian policing with five police officers currently deployed to Iraq and a plan to deploy up to 20 officers.⁷¹

66 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 9 November 2017, 1025 (Mirza Ismail).

67 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 9 November 2017, 1040 (Haider Elias, President, Yazda).

68 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 9 November 2017, 1040 (Payam Akhavan).

69 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 7 November 2017, 0900 (Sean Boyd, Executive Director, Middle East Relations, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade).

70 Ibid.

71 Ibid, 0930.

Acknowledging the importance of addressing the persecution of Yazidis through a multifaceted approach, the Committee recommends:

Facilitating a Favourable Environment for Return

Recommendation 3

That the Government of Canada work with multilateral partners to help internally displaced Yazidi persons return to their region by working towards creating a favourable environment for return in Northern Iraq.

RESETTLEMENT ISSUES FACING YAZIDI WOMEN AND CHILDREN

When government-assisted refugees arrive in Canada, they receive financial and settlement support from the federal government. Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada provides settlement support for GARs through the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP),⁷² which is delivered through a network of service provider organizations. RAP service provider organizations provide basic orientation for GARs, including airport pickup, temporary accommodation, help for finding permanent housing, and enrolment in government programs. The services offered through the RAP are generally provided in the first four to six weeks after arrival. Access to settlement services such as language training continues until individuals become Canadian citizens. These settlement services are also adapted to the specific needs of children and youth, such as settlement support services in schools, homework clubs, and art and recreation-based activities.⁷³ More specifically, tailored services for Yazidi children are offered with the help of specialized programs and groups, such as the Aurora's psycho-social settlement needs assessment at the Newcomers Employment and Education Development Services centre in Winnipeg, the Calgary Bride Foundation for Youth's Settlement Workers in Schools Program and the Calgary Catholic Immigration Society's Refugee Child Enhanced Integration Program.⁷⁴

Acknowledging that survivors of Daesh have experienced severe trauma, IRCC works with partners in the communities where the refugees will be resettled to arrange for appropriate settlement supports, such as interpretation and psychological, physical and

72 For more information, see IRCC, "Resettlement Assistance Program," [Financial help – Refugee](#).

73 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 7 November 2017, 0850 (Dawn Edlund).

74 IRCC, *Written response*, "Jenny Kwan-1-2017-11-07."



social supports.⁷⁵ Mohamed Al-Adeimi, Director of settlement services at the South London Neighbourhood Resource Centre, presented to the Committee the complex network of services available in London, Ontario, for resettled Yazidis.⁷⁶ He explained that, before the arrival of Yazidi women and children, “we put in place a kind of wraparound team with the support that we get through IRCC funding.”⁷⁷ Ms. Edlund noted that IRCC provided additional funding, from the \$21.7 million already set aside for this specific initiative, to organizations helping with the resettlement of Yazidi women and children.⁷⁸ The department “provided funding so each community can hire a wellness coordinator and also more supports for individual hands-on supports for each of the families.”⁷⁹ In addition, regional IRCC officers meet regularly with provincial officials, settlement agencies, clinics and other key partners such as school boards and divisions to ensure that an appropriate continuum of care is in place for these survivors of Daesh.⁸⁰

The South London Neighbourhood Resource Centre prioritized settlement services in five core areas: basic needs, financial support, language training, recreational needs and mental health care, as noted in Figure 1 below. The Centre also provided sensitivity training⁸¹ to the settlement staff to better understand “the atrocities and hardships that the Yazidi women and their families have undergone.”⁸² This type of training is necessary according to Louisa Taylor, Director of Refugee 613, because it eases the integration process for everyone involved.⁸³

75 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 7 November 2017, 0850 (Dawn Edlund).

76 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 30 November 2017, 0855 (Mohamed Al-Adeimi, Director, Newcomer Settlement Services, South London Neighbourhood Resource Centre).

77 Ibid.

78 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 7 November 2017, 0920 (Dawn Edlund); CIMM, [Evidence](#), 7 November 2017, 0920 (Jean-Marc Gionet, Acting Senior Director, Resettlement Operations, International Network, Department of Citizenship and Immigration).

79 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 7 November 2017, 0920 (Dawn Edlund).

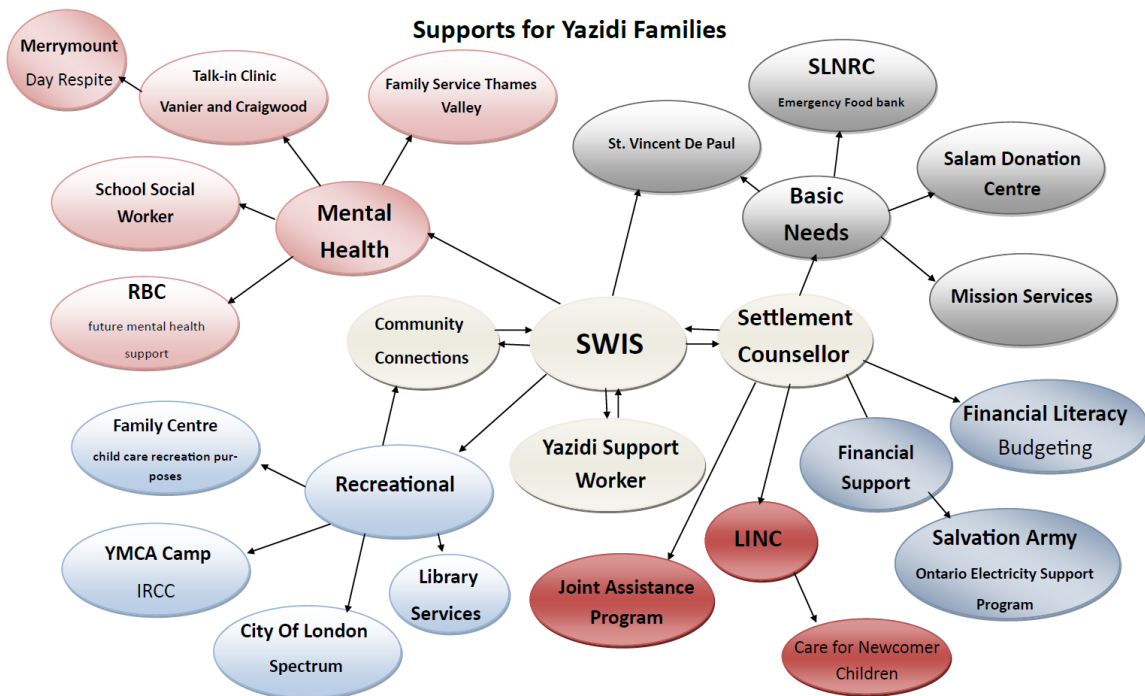
80 IRCC, *Written response*, “Michelle Rempel-5-2017-11-07.”

81 IRCC developed and circulated a Yazidi population profile detailing demographic and health characteristics as well as cultural considerations for this vulnerable population. CIMM, [Evidence](#), 7 November 2017, 0850 (Dawn Edlund).

82 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 30 November 2017, 0855 (Mohamed Al-Adeimi).

83 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 30 November 2017, 1010 (Louisa Taylor, Director, Refugee 613).

Figure 1 – Example of the support network provided by the South London Neighbourhood Resource Centre to resettled Yazidi women and children in London, Ontario



Note: SLNRC stands for South London Neighbourhood Resource Centre; RBC is the Royal Bank of Canada; SWIS means Settlement Workers in Schools; and LINC is Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada.

Source: South London Neighbourhood Resource Centre, *Background document*.

Mr. Koudeida, an employee of the London Cross Cultural Learner Centre, also provided a full picture of the settlement services offered by his organization. More specifically,

the Yazidi community has been working with the London Cross Cultural Learner Centre to provide all the services and immediate needs for the new arrivals, including but not limited to short-term accommodation; permanent accommodation; facilitation of needed documents, such as PR [permanent resident] cards and OHIP [Ontario Health Insurance Plan] cards; applying for child benefits; interim federal health and life skills supports; access to information, orientation, and education sessions; access to on-site medical care in partnership with our local community health centre; intensive, time-sensitive, and specialized case management; needs assessment, referrals, case coordination, home visits, and referrals to many agencies; settlement counselling and access to short-term on-site counselling; on-site child minding; language assessment



and referrals to LINC [Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada] and ESL [English as a second language] programs; participation in social, therapeutic, language, and skills-based groups; and matching families with volunteers in the community.⁸⁴

Nevertheless, despite this preparation, the Committee heard a variety of issues that resettled Yazidis have faced in Canada since February 2017. Witnesses raised concerns about isolation, lack of funding and support to access services such as health care, interpretation and language training. However, two witnesses reminded the Committee that issues of housing, interpretation, language and social connections are not “unique to Yazidi refugees”⁸⁵ and that all “refugees, no matter where they come from, are vulnerable”⁸⁶ to these resettlement challenges.

A. Location of Resettled Yazidi Women and Children in Canada

The Committee heard that, through the federal government’s initiative, Yazidi women and children have been resettled to cities in Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario and exceptionally to other provinces. Ms. Edlund stated that 642 government-assisted Yazidi refugees have gone to London, Toronto, Winnipeg, and Calgary, and 165 people have gone to 14 other communities across Canada, such as Montreal, Moose Jaw, Ottawa, Sherbrooke and Windsor.⁸⁷ She added that upon being informed of acquaintances in Canada, efforts were made to place newcomers near family or friends to facilitate integration.⁸⁸ Mr. Khoudeida indicated that the London Cross Cultural Learner Centre has helped 12 families with 46 members transfer from Toronto and other cities to London due to affordability and a connection to the local community.⁸⁹

In choosing where to locate new arrivals, IRCC “considered the extent to which communities had an existing Yazidi diaspora, adequate medical and psychosocial supports, availability of interpreters, and social service provider organizations with experience with similar population groups.”⁹⁰ IRCC also considered “the advice of Yazidi

84 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 30 November 2017, 0905 (Omar Khoudeida).

85 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 30 November 2017, 1005 (Shauna Labman).

86 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 30 November 2017, 1005 (Louisa Taylor).

87 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 7 November 2017, 0910 (Dawn Edlund); IRCC informed the Committee that Yazidis were resettled in cities other than London, Calgary, Toronto, Winnipeg, and Lethbridge only in cases where specifically requested by survivors. IRCC, *Written Responses*, “Michelle Rempel-3-2017-11-07” and “Michelle Rempel-1-2017-11-07.”

88 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 7 November 2017, 0850 (Dawn Edlund).

89 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 30 November 2017, 0905 (Omar Khoudeida).

90 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 7 November 2017, 0850 (Dawn Edlund).

leaders in Iraq and Canada who emphasized the importance of connections to the religious community in Canada, allowing for the organic formation of community networks amongst the newly resettled families.”⁹¹ Hadji Hesso, from Yazidi Association of Manitoba, added that the Yazidi women and children were also consulted and informed IRCC that they wanted to go to existing Yazidi communities in Canada because it is easier to integrate.⁹²

Ms. Edlund explained that the presence of an existing Yazidi community in Canada is due to the previous resettlement movement of 23,000 Iraqis in Canada between 2009 and 2014, which included Iraqi nationals who ethnically and/or religiously identified as Yazidi. These individuals created pockets of Canadian Yazidi diaspora in London, Toronto, Winnipeg and Calgary.⁹³ Priority was therefore given to resettle Yazidi women and children in these cities, with Lethbridge foreseen as a destination for future arrivals.⁹⁴ Ms. Edlund stated that these five cities have the infrastructure in terms of community and religious support.⁹⁵ In her written submission to the Committee, Ms. Bolt requested that Edmonton be considered by IRCC as an additional area to relocate Yazidi women and children because she has put “together teams of women who are ready and willing to help.”⁹⁶

Witnesses, however, highlighted that many Yazidi women and children arrive in Canada not knowing that there are Yazidis already established in the country.⁹⁷ Project Abraham at the Mozuud Freedom Foundation argued in a written brief that “the government does not connect them with the established Canadian Yazidi community, which adds to their trauma, fear, and the feeling of isolation.”⁹⁸ For example, Mr. Hesso pointed out that Lethbridge is not a community with the infrastructure to welcome resettled Yazidi women and children; “no Yazidi families or single members live in Lethbridge today.”⁹⁹

91 Ibid.

92 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 9 November 2017, 0930 (Hadji Hesso).

93 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 7 November 2017, 0910 (Dawn Edlund).

94 Ibid., 0850.

95 Ibid., 0910.

96 Natalie Boldt, [Written submission](#), p. 3.

97 Mozuud Freedom Foundation, [Written submission](#), p. 2; Nadre Atto, *Speaking notes*, p. 1.

98 Mozuud Freedom Foundation, [Written submission](#), p. 2.

99 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 9 November 2017, 0930 (Hadji Hesso). IRCC indicated that eight government-assisted Yazidi refugees were located in Lethbridge as of 19 November 2017. IRCC, *Written response*, Michelle Rempel-1-2017-11-07.”



Mr. Weiss suggested countering isolation between resettled Yazidi families in Winnipeg by settling “them close to each other so that their children are attending the same schools together and the families have an ability to interact.”¹⁰⁰

Witnesses emphasized the importance of properly planning where Yazidi women and children are resettled in Canada. Mr. Barber further argued that survivors should be settled “in the same neighborhood; not scattered in multiple locations within a single city,”¹⁰¹ especially because Yazidi women and children, he believes, do not have the same capacity to drive or use public transportation as other resettled refugees.¹⁰² Benjamin Chacon, Executive Director of Interpretation Services at Cultural Interpretation Services for Our Communities, also spoke of developing connections and communications between the resettlement locations in order to develop the infrastructure and capacity of services to Yazidi women and children in their mother tongue.¹⁰³

As such, the Committee recommends:

Building a Cohesive Community

Recommendation 4

That Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada offer newly arrived Yazidi women and children information about existing Yazidi communities in Canada to help build a supportive Canadian network of Yazidi people; and facilitate the resettlement of Yazidi women and children in areas with existing Yazidi communities to assist with their integration.

100 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 9 November 2017, 0850 (Lorne Weiss).

101 Matthew Travis Barber, [Written submission](#), p. 8.

102 Matthew Travis Barber, [Written submission](#), p. 8; CIMM, [Evidence](#), 30 November 2017, 0850 (Shannon Smith, as an individual).

103 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 30 November 2017, 0935 (Benjamin Chacon, Executive Director, Interpretation Services, Cultural Interpretation Services for Our Communities).

Strengthening Services

Recommendation 5

That Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada continue to support settlement service providers assisting Yazidi women and children in developing shared capacity and best practices particularly within the five relocation areas, namely London, Toronto, Winnipeg, Calgary and Lethbridge.

Developing Best Practices for the Resettlement of Vulnerable Groups

Recommendation 6

That Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada work with relevant stakeholders and experts on the development of a best practices guide for the settlement sector on the resettlement and integration of vulnerable groups.

B. Housing and Financial Needs

The Resettlement Assistance Program, delivered through a network of service provider organizations, provides GARs with temporary accommodations and support for finding permanent housing. When considering where to house the resettled Yazidi women and children, IRCC consulted with counterparts in Germany, who have also resettled Yazidi women and children, and was informed to expect large families of 10 to 12 people.¹⁰⁴ However, Ms. Edlund noted that, in fact, “the individual nuclear families are quite small, two to three people.”¹⁰⁵ She further explained that requests had been made for extended family members who are also coming to Canada to live in the same household.¹⁰⁶ Housing that accommodates not only the immediate family, but also brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, grandparents, and *de facto* family members, is therefore being sought.

Government-assisted refugees, whose initial resettlement in Canada is entirely supported by the Government of Canada, receive financial and settlement support. It is important to note that financial support “can last up to one year from the date of arrival in Canada, or until the refugee is able to support himself or herself, whichever happens

104 CIMM, *Evidence*, 7 November 2017, 0925 (Dawn Edlund).

105 Ibid.

106 Ibid.



first.”¹⁰⁷ Ms. Edlund informed the Committee that there is “another program called the Joint Assistance Sponsorship¹⁰⁸ where, for particularly vulnerable families, that income support can be extended to a two-year period.”¹⁰⁹ Mr. Khoudeida indicated that the London Cross Cultural Learner Centre has “identified some single mothers with children who face additional settlement challenges and who are in need of longer-term support.”¹¹⁰ As of 30 November 2017, the London Cross Cultural Learner Centre got two families into the Joint Assistance Sponsorship Program.¹¹¹ Prof. Labman encouraged “a broader examination of the expansion and promotion of the Joint Assistance [Sponsorship] Program” to explore the possibility of closer partnership between the government and private sponsors.¹¹²

The Committee also heard that resettled Yazidi women and children face a number of challenges when accessing housing and financial support in Canada, including affordability.¹¹³ Overall, Ms. Taylor stated that there are “a lot of problems with affordable housing, and refugees are among the most vulnerable to that issue.”¹¹⁴ Mr. Ismail suggested that all levels of government work together “to provide these Yazidis with government housing.”¹¹⁵

Mr. Ismail said that the main challenge for resettled Yazidi women and children is finding permanent housing. He observed that it was “left up to the refugees to find their own dwelling” with housing NGOs only providing apartment listings as housing support.¹¹⁶ While this is the case with most refugees, he believes that this is especially difficult for resettled Yazidis because they do not have “any familiarity with Canadian culture,

107 IRCC, *Get government assistance – Refugees*.

108 According to IRCC, the *Joint Assistance Sponsorship Program* allows for organizations to partner with IRCC to help resettle government-assisted refugees with special needs and provide support for up to 36 months, in some cases.

109 CIMM, *Evidence*, 7 November 2017, 0940 (Dawn Edlund).

110 CIMM, *Evidence*, 30 November 2017, 0905 (Omar Khoudeida).

111 London Cross Cultural Learner Centre, *Written submission*, p. 2.

112 CIMM, *Evidence*, 30 November 2017, 1000 (Shauna Labman).

113 CIMM, *Evidence*, 30 November 2017, 0905 (Omar Khoudeida); Nadre Atto, *Speaking notes*, p. 1.

114 CIMM, *Evidence*, 30 November 2017, 1045 (Louisa Taylor).

115 CIMM, *Evidence*, 9 November 2017, 1025 (Mirza Ismail).

116 *Ibid.*, 1020.

language skills, and transportation.”¹¹⁷ Mr. Ismail also explained that when a family moves into a new home, it can take “up to two weeks or more for the government to provide furniture, including beds.”¹¹⁸

According to witnesses, insufficient monthly income and delays in the receipt of federal child tax benefits have meant that rent, food, and other expenses are barely covered by the funds allocated to families.¹¹⁹ Ms. Rose explained that the child benefit payments are delayed because “there is a continual glitch where ... the family receives notification that the government is waiting to receive information on the spouse’s income.”¹²⁰ She emphasized to the Committee that “this is happening to grieving widows,”¹²¹ who have also suffered severe trauma. According to her, the child benefit payments generally arrive “within 11 weeks from the time of application, [but in] reality, some families do not see these payments for up to six months.”¹²² The Canadian Council for Refugees highlighted the importance of sensitivity from government departments such as Canada Revenue Agency (CRA). The organization echoed the concerns about delayed payments voiced by Ms. Rose, adding that families have faced delays in receiving their Canada Child Benefit payments due to the CRA investigating the situation of a father presumed missing or deceased. The organization added that requests for supporting documentation for a missing or deceased spouse can cause trauma to a surviving mother who may be yearning for a spouse to be found alive and therefore unwilling to sign an affidavit affirming his death.¹²³ COSTI Immigrant Services voiced similar concerns but also noted that, in February 2017, CRA agreed to accept letters of support from settlement agencies on behalf of their clients.¹²⁴

Mr. Barber underlined the importance of housing within close proximity to educational, medical, and therapeutic resources. He described the experience of Yazidis resettled in

117 CIMM, *Evidence*, 9 November 2017, 1020 (Mirza Ismail). The lack of support in finding permanent housing after the Resettlement Assistance Program temporary accommodation period was also raised by Project Abraham in a [written submission](#) to the Committee.

118 CIMM, *Evidence*, 9 November 2017, 1020 (Mirza Ismail).

119 Mozuud Freedom Foundation, [Written submission](#), p. 3; CIMM, *Evidence*, 9 November 2017, 1020 (Mirza Ismail); CIMM, *Evidence*, 5 December 2017, 0920 (Debbie Rose); Nadre Atto, *Speaking notes*, p. 1; Natalie Boldt, [Written submission](#), p. 3.

120 CIMM, *Evidence*, 5 December 2017, 0920 (Debbie Rose).

121 Ibid.

122 Ibid.

123 Canadian Council for Refugees, [Written submission](#), p. 3.

124 COSTI Immigrant Services, [Written submission](#), p. 4.



Germany “who had only seen a doctor once in six months, not because of the availability of the doctors, but because they were housed far from where the medical options were located and had difficulty navigating the public transportation system.”¹²⁵ Shannon Smith echoed the same recommendation and shared with the Committee the experience of the Morad family who was resettled to Calgary earlier this spring. She highlighted how difficult it was for the oldest daughter in the family, who is 13 years old, to attend school because of the distance between the school and the house.

She had to walk several blocks and take two buses to get there, and she became very overwhelmed. She and her mother decided she would no longer be put through that, and so she stopped attending school after the first day. ... I asked her if she wanted to go to school. She fell to her knees crying and shaking and saying she wanted to go to school but didn't know how.¹²⁶

Ms. Smith informed the school of the situation on behalf of the family and the principal of the school offered to provide transportation to the 13 year old by taxi to and from school.¹²⁷

Overall, housing affordability and service proximity are essential to refugees who arrive in Canada because they are among the most vulnerable. Resettled Yazidi women and children can start rebuilding their lives in Canada thanks to the housing and income support from the federal government.

As such, the Committee recommends:

Ensuring Proximity to Services and Housing which is Affordable

Recommendation 7

That the Government of Canada recognize that resettled Yazidi women and children do not necessarily have the knowledge, ability or resources to access services on their own and should assist them in relocating to areas that are in close proximity to services, such as public transportation, educational and medical centres as well as settlement services; and work with provincial and municipal governments as well as service provider organizations to ensure resettled Yazidi women and children have improved access to housing which is affordable.

125 Matthew Travis Barber, *Written submission*, 14 November 2017, p. 8.

126 CIMM, *Evidence*, 30 November 2017, 0850 (Shannon Smith).

127 Ibid.

C. Health Care Needs

In November 2016, during its study on the resettlement of Yazidi women and girls, the Committee heard from Dr. Jan Ilhan Kizilhan, head of the department of Mental Health and Addiction at the Cooperative State University Baden-Württemberg in Germany. Dr. Kizilhan conducted psychological examinations of Daesh survivors in Iraq and examined 1,400 Yazidi women and girls in Northern Iraq in 2016.¹²⁸ He explained to the Committee the trauma and suffering undergone by survivors of Daesh and the significant challenges to provide the necessary health care support.

The survivors, as well as the Yazidi community they belong to, will be traumatized for decades. Forms of violence include rape, harassment, mutilation, enslavement, marking the victims by branding, and killing the victims. Rape is an extreme assault of the intimate self, and it causes enormous feeling of humiliation and shame. Most of the victims develop post-traumatic stress disorder and a range of other disorders, such as depression, anxiety, and somatic disorders.

...

The medical and psychological care of people who experience the trauma process like the Yazidis provide significant challenges for therapists, physicians, and other experts. Apart from the language difficulties resulting from forced migration, they include patients, cultural-specific perspectives and description of illness, resulting in story-telling modes, political situation, gender-specific aspects, and transgenerational trauma.¹²⁹

By consulting with its German counterparts and multilateral partners, IRCC was made aware of the types of health care support required to attend to Yazidi women and children and had “insight into the integration supports that people have been using.”¹³⁰ Ms. Edlund, from IRCC, noted that given the extensive trauma resettled Yazidis have survived, “a tremendous amount of psychosocial supports and mental health supports need to be put in place” and that “[o]ur local immigration partnerships have then ensured, working with us, that the settlement supports are actually available so we don’t have gaps in service.”¹³¹ The Department also worked with the provinces and territories to arrange complementary programming of services and health care support.

128 CIMM, *Evidence*, 17 November 2016, 0950, (Dr. Jan Ilhan Kizilhan, Head, Department of Mental Health and Addiction, Cooperative State University and Dean of the Institute for Psychotherapy and Psychotraumatology, University of Dohuk, as an Individual).

129 Ibid.

130 CIMM, *Evidence*, 7 November 2017, 0920 (Dawn Edlund).

131 Ibid., 0905.



At the federal level, this meant providing adequate resources to the Interim Federal Health Program to ensure medical services are available.¹³² For example, interpretation support is covered under the Interim Federal Health Program.¹³³ IRCC noted, however, that it is currently working with different stakeholders towards ensuring specialized medical services may be available to the Yazidi women and children in their own language rather than through interpretation.¹³⁴

Yazidi women and children are resettled to Canada mainly through the GAR Program. As such, they are resettled as permanent residents and have their primary health care covered by the province where they have been resettled.¹³⁵ The Interim Federal Health Program offered by the federal government is “a top-up to what they would get from their normal provincial health services.”¹³⁶

Corinne Prince, Director General of Settlement and Integration Policy Branch at IRCC, described the collaboration between involved parties. She stated that in Calgary,

local service provider organizations are working extremely closely—more than ever, actually—with the local health authorities, not only in terms of mental health but even, as a specific example, ensuring that the local paramedic teams understand the issues this particular [Yazidi] population is dealing with and can adjust the services they are offering to ensure they’re dealing with the deep issues.¹³⁷

Ms. Edlund informed the Committee that, as of 7 November 2017, “636 people have accessed interim federal health services [and the] highest number of services have been in relation to medications and to vision care.”¹³⁸

1. Mental health support

The Committee learned that, in general, refugee populations are more likely than the general population to be exposed to and/or encounter social factors that can affect

132 Ibid., 0920.

133 IRCC, *Written response*, “Michelle Rempel-4-2017-11-07.”

134 IRCC, *Written response*, “Jenny Kwan-2-2017-11-07.”

135 CIMM, *Evidence*, 7 November 2017, 0920 (Dawn Edlund).

136 Ibid., 0940 .

137 CIMM, *Evidence*, 7 November 2017, 0935 (Corinne Prince, Director General, Settlement and Integration Policy Branch, Department of Citizenship and Immigration).

138 CIMM, *Evidence*, 7 November 2017, 0945 (Dawn Edlund).

someone's risk of developing a mental health problem or illness.¹³⁹ The resettled Yazidi women and children have faced a specific set of factors that make them vulnerable to mental health problems or illnesses. The London Cross Cultural Learner Centre emphasized that "many families are living with open wounds; current and complex trauma, as family members whereabouts are unknown, missing and/or presumed dead at the hands of the Islamic State."¹⁴⁰

The Mental Health Commission of Canada added that stress from "failure to meet cultural expectations, an ethos of non-disclosure due to fear of shame and a lack of social support effect immigrant and refugees disproportionately and may aggravate [...] mental health problems."¹⁴¹

As such, the London Cross Cultural Learner Centre noted that "settlement is hard to attain when grieving processes are hard to even entertain let alone endeavour to start."¹⁴² For that reason, the Centre partnered with the Canadian Mental Health Association to pilot a program for Yazidi women, which focuses on "fostering belonging, connection, trust and social cohesion and supporting the women in learning coping tools and strategies to support their resettlement journeys."¹⁴³ The Centre also partnered with Merrymount Family Support and Crisis Centre to "collaborate on an art therapy group for Yazidi children," which allows creative expression for children affected by armed conflict and focuses on recovery and resilience.¹⁴⁴ Mr. Hesso observed that specific mental health support to children is necessary. He testified that while resettled Yazidi children said they love attending school, they have difficulties "learning because of the impact of trauma, which makes it difficult to learn and retain information."¹⁴⁵

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada provides funding to communities for a wellness coordinator.¹⁴⁶ The London Cross Cultural Learner Centre used this funding to hire two wellness coordinators to "provide short-term brief counselling and therapeutic

139 Mental Health Commission of Canada, *The Case for Diversity*, p. 10.

140 London Cross Cultural Learner Centre, *Written submission*, p. 4.

141 Mental Health Commission of Canada, *The Case for Diversity*, p. 11.

142 London Cross Cultural Learner Centre, *Written submission*, p. 4.

143 Ibid.

144 Ibid.

145 CIMM, *Evidence*, 9 November 2017, 0900 (Hadji Hesso).

146 CIMM, *Evidence*, 7 November 2017, 0920 (Dawn Edlund).



group support. However, coping with trauma due to forced displacement and violence requires long-term and holistic support and interventions.”¹⁴⁷

Ms. Edlund, from IRCC, pointed out that, “up until now, there has not been a large number of individuals who have received individualized counselling.”¹⁴⁸ Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada is aware of only five individuals who have accessed individualized counselling¹⁴⁹ for mental health support and of 50 individuals who have accessed, through the Interim Federal Health Program, medications that are possibly related to mental health supports.¹⁵⁰ However, Ms. Edlund reminded the Committee that resettled Yazidis can access medical services at the provincial and territorial level as well as the federal level.¹⁵¹ Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada provided the Committee with federal data and data from the Canadian Mental Health Association, which explains that “in situations like this you have the initial euphoria when people arrive in Canada, and then their mental health needs resurface six to 24 months in.”¹⁵²

a. Barriers to accessing mental health support

According to the Mental Health Commission of Canada, refugee populations are less likely than the general population to seek help for mental health problems.¹⁵³ Some fear seeking mental health care because of past negative experiences in their country of origin or of possible negative perceptions in the host country. The fear of being seen as a burden to society can be a powerful barrier when it is combined with the stigma surrounding mental health. It is not uncommon to find individuals who believe that having mental health problems brings shame to themselves, their family and their community. Accessing mental health services can also be a barrier, especially when lacking proficiency in English or French.¹⁵⁴ Services are seen as culturally incompatible and inaccessible due to long wait lists, complicated procedures and inconvenient hours. In addition, circumstantial challenges such as transportation, costs, isolation, weather

147 London Cross Cultural Learner Centre, [Written submission](#), p. 4.

148 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 7 November 2017, 0935 (Dawn Edlund).

149 Ibid., 0940.

150 Ibid., 0935.

151 Ibid., 0940.

152 Ibid.

153 Mental Health Commission of Canada, [The Case for Diversity](#), p. 12.

154 Ibid.

and competing demands can also impede seeking out mental health care, especially for children, women and seniors.¹⁵⁵

Project Abraham explained that “refugees from the Middle East have resistance to getting therapy (sic) to help them with their trauma” and that “there needs to be a better program of support to help them.”¹⁵⁶ Ms. Abdallah also added that a barrier to mental health treatment is the lack of interpretation and translation services for the Yazidi mother tongue, Kurmanji.¹⁵⁷

Ms. Edlund explained that IRCC is conscious of the linguistic barrier to mental health support and that, under the Interim Federal Health Program, interpretation and translation services are paid for by the federal government.¹⁵⁸ However, the services are offered through local immigration partnerships.¹⁵⁹ She stated that IRCC has “been working with Yazidi communities in our four core cities—soon to be five—to make sure that we have those additional interpretation services available.”¹⁶⁰ The case of the Calgary Catholic Immigration Society hiring a Kurmanji interpreter from Winnipeg was given as an example.¹⁶¹ The Ontario Council on Community Interpreting and the Language Industry Association highlighted that services provided in a timely and linguistically appropriate manner have the benefit of decreasing the “escalation of health care and mental health issues and decrease expenditures for all levels of government.”¹⁶²

In order to ensure better access to mental health support for survivors of Daesh, Ms. Smith recommended that Yazidi women and girls have “access to personalized, individualized mental health care, not in a group setting, but in their homes.”¹⁶³ She added that

155 Ibid.

156 Mozuud Freedom Foundation, [Written submission](#), p. 2.

157 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 9 November 2017, 0920 (Dalal Abdallah).

158 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 7 November 2017, 0920 (Dawn Edlund).

159 Ibid.

160 Ibid., 0910.

161 Ibid.

162 Ontario Council on Community Interpreting, Language Industry Association, [Written submission](#), p. 2.

163 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 30 November 2017, 0930 (Shannon Smith).



This is extreme sexual trauma, even for children, and it's very difficult for them—outside the comfort of their home and a trusting, private relationship—to really, fully express what they've been through. I believe that's why they continue to relive it.¹⁶⁴

Overall, Ms. Taylor, from Refugee 613, stressed the importance of investing in mental health services to improve support for refugees. Based on her experience with Syrian refugees, she stated that “to be dislocated from your home against your will is a trauma, no matter what.”¹⁶⁵ She recommended investing “in creative and flexible mental health support that can get over the cultural stigma of seeking out support.”¹⁶⁶ Mr. Barber and Ms. Boldt reiterated that all survivors of Daesh need access to better mental health resources.¹⁶⁷

As such, the Committee recommends the following:

Improving Mental Health Support and Access

Recommendation 8

That the Government of Canada work with provincial and territorial governments, the Mental Health Commission of Canada and all relevant partners to invest in improving mental health support for all refugees resettled in Canada; and work to improve access to mental health support for Yazidi women and children in their mother tongue when accessing services through the Interim Federal Health Program.

D. Interpretation Services

Appropriate settlement support includes interpretation and translation services to allow resettled refugees to access services as soon as they arrive in Canada.¹⁶⁸ However, witnesses testified that when resettled Yazidi women and children access settlement services, they encounter a lack of interpretation services in Kurmanji, the Yazidi mother tongue.

Nadre Atto, a resettled Yazidi refugee and a mother of five, explained to the Committee that, when she arrived in Canada, she did not have access to Kurmanji interpretation.

164 Ibid.

165 CIMM, *Evidence*, 30 November 2017, 1005 (Louisa Taylor).

166 Ibid.

167 Matthew Travis Barber, *Written submission*, p. 5; Natalie Boldt, *Written submission*, p. 4.

168 CIMM, *Evidence*, 7 November 2017, 0850 (Dawn Edlund).

She said she was “lucky” that her brother spoke Arabic and could converse with officials and settlement organizations through an Arabic interpreter.¹⁶⁹ According to Mr. Ismail from the Yazidi Human Rights Organization, this is an issue, especially for resettled Yazidi women and children, because Arabic-speaking interpreters “add to their confusion and fear. Some Yezidis thought they were back in the hands of ISIS.”¹⁷⁰ Ms. Smith also shared with the Committee that Arabic is a trigger for the young Yazidi girl she helps in Calgary, “because her captors spoke Arabic.”¹⁷¹ Ms. Smith also indicated that at school the girl “tends to stay away from the Arabic children” for the same reason.¹⁷²

Mr. Chacon, from Cultural Interpretation Services for Our Communities, pointed out that not offering Kurmanji interpretation to resettled Yazidis “is insulting to them because of all the baggage they are carrying.”¹⁷³ Assuming that Yazidis speak Arabic because they “come from the borders of Syria or Iraq” is a misconception.¹⁷⁴ Mr. Chacon stated that more education is needed among service provider organizations to ensure the proper linguistic capacity is available to assist resettled Yazidi women and children.¹⁷⁵ He also recommended sharing interpretation capacities between settlement organizations to provide services to Yazidi women and children in their mother tongue.¹⁷⁶

Mr. Chacon also informed the committee that Kurmanji is spoken in as many as 12 regional dialects, with some dialects only spoken, not written. This creates a challenge for interpretation and translation.¹⁷⁷ For example, he pointed out that they have developed a fluency assessment for Kurmanji, but due to the existence of several dialects, they would need to develop new assessments for each dialect to ensure that interpreters are fluent.¹⁷⁸ The Cultural Interpretation Services for Our Communities often needs to recruit, train and evaluate interpreters for languages of lesser diffusion. The organization identifies

169 Nadre Atto, *Speaking notes*, p. 1.

170 CIMM, *Evidence*, 9 November 2017, 1020 (Mirza Ismail).

171 CIMM, *Evidence*, 30 November 2017, 0930 (Shannon Smith).

172 Ibid.

173 CIMM, *Evidence*, 30 November 2017, 0935 (Benjamin Chacon).

174 Ibid.

175 Ibid., 0945.

176 Ibid., 0935.

177 Ibid., 0945.

178 Ibid., 0935.



interpreters and ensures “that they have the fluency necessary to be able to provide the services in the communities.”¹⁷⁹ It also provides the necessary training “to educate them and to ensure that they follow the protocols we have put in place here in Canada, as well as build vocabulary in the different areas such as medical, legal, and social environments.”¹⁸⁰ This process requires a lot of resources and time and is not always feasible for a local organization such as the Cultural Interpretation Services for Our Communities.¹⁸¹ Such organizations would need to receive “some type of support from the community to be able to develop these assessments.”¹⁸² However, Mr. Chacon noted that all the training is provided online, making it accessible across Canada and building a stronger capacity throughout the country.¹⁸³

Professor Andrew Clifford, Director, Master of Conference Interpreting at Glendon College, York University, does not train interpreters in Kurmanji, but knows how difficult it is to find qualified applicants who will become interpreters. He explained that, when people come to an interpreter training program, they must have a very strong command of their working languages. Interpreters are not trained to speak, but to interpret another language.¹⁸⁴ He also highlighted that it is a specialized skill that cannot be practised by untrained or unqualified individuals, especially in life-changing situations such as surgery or a resettlement application.¹⁸⁵

Mr. Koudeida shared with the Committee the experience of the London Cross Cultural Learner Centre, where 10 people were trained to help interpret for resettled Yazidis. He specified that there are specially trained women who work with Yazidi women and girls, especially for visits to the doctor or for referrals. The London Cross Cultural Learner Centre took the initiative to find and train interpreters “as soon as the announcement was made this year” for resettling survivors of Daesh.¹⁸⁶ Mr. Koudeida recognized that “we need to train more Yazidis who speak the direct language to help” the resettled

179 Ibid., 0910.

180 Ibid.

181 Ibid.

182 Ibid.

183 Ibid.

184 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 5 December 2017, 0900 (Andrew Clifford, Director, Master of Conference Interpreting, Glendon College, York University, as an individual).

185 Ibid., 0930.

186 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 30 November 2017, 0940 (Omar Koudeida).

Yazidis.¹⁸⁷ In order to bridge the gap from one relocation area to another, he suggested doing interpretation over the phone, if the situation permits it.¹⁸⁸

Lola Bendana, Director at Multi-Languages Corporation, shared with the Committee a strategy that could help increase the numbers of interpreters for languages of lesser diffusion such as Kurmanji. She presented the idea of training some refugees as interpreters, which is currently piloted by some settlement organizations in Toronto. However, the refugees need to have a working proficiency in English or French and need to heal from their own personal “trauma before they can function properly as interpreters.”¹⁸⁹

Ms. Smith recommended that “interpretation services [be extended] beyond six months, because communication is a barrier to all the other issues, such as transportation and mental health services.”¹⁹⁰ Ms. Bendana added that if “high-needs refugee populations ... receive the help they need in a timely manner from a professional interpreter, there will be less need for health care services, fewer mental health issues, and a lowering of costs in all levels of government.”¹⁹¹

As such, the Committee recommends:

Anticipating Interpreting Needs

Recommendation 9

That Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada anticipate linguistic capacity needs in its resettlement initiatives and provide professional interpretation to newcomers in their mother tongue.

187 Ibid., 0925.

188 Ibid.

189 CIMM, *Evidence*, 30 November 2017, 1035 (Lola Bendana, Director, Multi-Languages Corporation).

190 CIMM, *Evidence*, 30 November 2017, 0930 (Shannon Smith). However, IRCC stated that translation and interpretation services do not end after six months. IRCC, *Written response*, “Michelle Rempel-2-2017-11-07.”

191 CIMM, *Evidence*, 30 November 2017, 0955 (Lola Bendana).



Developing Community Interpreting

Recommendation 10

That Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada work with provincial, territorial and municipal governments, as well as professional associations in the areas of interpretation and translation, to develop the capacity of community interpreting and to ensure that professional interpretation is provided to newcomers to Canada who are in need of this service.

E. Language Acquisition

Currently, Yazidi women and children are resettled in cities where a majority of the population is English speaking. One of the most common settlement services is language training, which is offered from the time a refugee arrives in Canada until becoming a Canadian citizen. Witnesses remarked that resettled Yazidi women and children do acquire English, but with certain difficulties.

The London Cross Cultural Learner Centre stated that circumstantial challenges such as childcare, medical appointments and transportation act as barriers for Yazidi women who attend language classes to learn English.¹⁹² However, Mr. Koudeida said that resettled Yazidis in London are attending classes and are learning the language.¹⁹³ According to him, “that’s their first goal, to learn the language.”¹⁹⁴ Mr. Hesso added that resettled Yazidis in Winnipeg do attend English classes and “appear to learn more through conversational groups where they make connections and build relationships with others.”¹⁹⁵ The Yazidi Association of Manitoba encouraged resettlement agencies to find creative ways to teach English as a Second Language with the purpose of facilitating language acquisition.¹⁹⁶ Project Abraham also suggested providing conversational opportunities in English in the Yazidi community, which would include resettled Yazidis who cannot attend regular language training.¹⁹⁷

192 London Cross Cultural Learner Centre, *Written submission*, p. 4.

193 CIMM, *Evidence*, 30 November 2017, 0940 (Omar Koudeida).

194 Ibid.

195 CIMM, *Evidence*, 9 November 2017, 0900 (Hadji Hesso).

196 Ibid.

197 Mozuud Freedom Foundation, *Written submission*, p. 3.

The London Cross Cultural Learner Centre underlined that poor language acquisition is

compounded by experiences of gender based violence and trauma [which lead to] focused interventions for employment ... [as well as] reconfigurations and reorganizations of some of these family units. For example, many children and youth take a heightened role as navigator, interpreter and decision maker.¹⁹⁸

Mr. Barber noted that “the acquisition of new language skills ... will be the first step in a process that will allow many women and girls to receive important psychological therapy in the future.”¹⁹⁹

Ms. Abdallah shared with the Committee the determination of a Yazidi woman resettled in London, Ontario, who wants to acquire English. She attends an English as a Second Language program. According to Ms. Abdallah, “she wants to learn English and become a voice for the voiceless” despite all the pain and struggle she went through and is still going through.²⁰⁰ The Committee also heard from Ms. Smith who shared the experience of the Yazidi woman who is the head of the Morad family resettled in Calgary. Ms. Smith stated that she has seen little or no progress in the woman’s ability to learn English over the last seven months. She added: “She’s been taking classes. She’s been attending regularly and trying very hard, but I believe the stress and the trauma are preventing her from learning English.”²⁰¹ However, Fariborz Birjandian, from the Calgary Catholic Immigration Society, informed the Committee that his organization has been assisting the Morad family and that, in his opinion, the family has shown resilience and has made significant headway since arriving in Canada.²⁰²

198 London Cross Cultural Learner Centre, [Written submission](#), pp. 4-5.

199 Matthew Travis Barber, [Written submission](#), p. 8.

200 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 9 November 2017, 0905 (Dalal Abdallah).

201 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 30 November 2017, 0850 (Shannon Smith).

202 Calgary Catholic Immigration Society, [Written submission](#), p. 2.



Overall, refugees, protected persons and permanent residents can take language classes, either in English or in French, at no cost. IRCC finances in both official languages the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program since 1992.²⁰³ The Committee recognizes the importance of Canada’s official languages and, as such, recommends:

Encourage Language Acquisition

Recommendation 11

That Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada continue its support of language training for all refugees.

NEED FOR FAMILY REUNIFICATION

One of the objectives cited in the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* is “to support the self-sufficiency and the social and economic well-being of refugees by facilitating reunification with their family members in Canada.”²⁰⁴ Family reunification for refugees is mainly facilitated through the “One-Year Window,”²⁰⁵ under which both government-assisted and privately sponsored refugees have the opportunity to reunite with spouses, common-law partners, dependent children and their dependent children, within their first year in Canada. A resettled refugee can apply for family reunification within one year of admission to Canada. While the family members do not need to be refugees in their own right, they must have been declared in the original resettlement application of the principal applicant.

However, it is possible that Yazidi women and children have left behind a member of the family class due to situations outside of their control, such as violence and captivity by Daesh.²⁰⁶ Mr. Hesso provided the example of a Yazidi boy who was reunited with his mother in Canada in August 2017. Mr. Hesso explained that the boy was captured by

203 IRCC, [Language classes funded by the Government of Canada](#).

204 *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*, [IRPA] S.C.2001, c.27, section 3(2)(f).

205 IRCC, [Request to process following family members under the one-year window of opportunity provisions](#). The One-Year Window of Opportunity to reunite with family members applies only to persons who immigrated to Canada as Convention Refugees Abroad or as Humanitarian-Protected Persons Abroad.

206 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 9 November 2017, 0905 (Dalal Abdallah); CIMM, [Evidence](#), 9 November 2017, 0900 (Hadji Hesso); CIMM, [Evidence](#), 30 November 2017, 0850 (Shannon Smith); CIMM, [Evidence](#), 5 December 2017, 0915 (Nadre Atto, as an individual).

Daesh back in 2014 and was found alive in July of this year.²⁰⁷ The mother had arrived in Winnipeg in February 2017 and did not know if her son was still alive. After seeing pictures of a battle in Mosul, she recognized her son and undertook all possible avenues to be reunited with him in Canada.²⁰⁸

Nevertheless, Ms. Rose argued that Yazidis often believe family members to be dead and do not include them in the application of the principal applicant. She claimed that, in those cases, the current One-Year Window Program creates “a long, drawn-out process that could take years” to prove the person sponsored is an eligible family member under the program.²⁰⁹ COSTI Immigrant Services explained that, in addition to not including family members believed to be deceased, it is not unusual for missing family members to be located after the first year. In such cases, the organization explained, there are few methods for resettlement other than a Humanitarian and Compassionate claim, which costs money and usually requires the assistance of a lawyer.²¹⁰

In regards to family reunification for resettled Yazidi women and children, Ms. Edlund explained that IRCC asked the UNHCR to include extended family as much as possible when referring cases.²¹¹ The UNHCR did refer extended family members and they are counted in the overall initiative to resettle Yazidi women and children. Ms. Edlund added that IRCC is currently identifying “whether there are any individuals who are family members who were perhaps in captivity and have been released and the mechanisms for getting them to Canada quickly to reunite.”²¹²

However, the Committee heard from several witnesses who advocated that more should be done to reunite Yazidi families affected by the persecution and the war. Ms. Atto urged the Committee to “bring more Yazidi families over here to Canada to help them because the situation over there is” dire.²¹³ She also called for reuniting with her brother, sister, and mother who were not resettled with her to Canada.²¹⁴ Mr. Hesso

207 CIMM, *Evidence*, 9 November 2017, 0900 (Hadji Hesso).

208 Karen Pauls, “[Tearful reunion as Yazidi boy arrives in Winnipeg](#),” *CBC News*, 17 August 2017.

209 CIMM, *Evidence*, 5 December 2017, 0920 (Debbie Rose).

210 COSTI Immigrant Services, *Written submission*, p. 4.

211 CIMM, *Evidence*, 7 November 2017, 0925 (Dawn Edlund). IRCC also instructed UNHCR to ensure that individuals were not referred to multiple resettlement countries and that family members were not referred to different resettlement countries. IRCC, *Written response*, “Michelle Rempel-7-2017-11-07.”

212 CIMM, *Evidence*, 7 November 2017, 1015 (Dawn Edlund).

213 CIMM, *Evidence*, 5 December 2017, 0915 (Nadre Atto).

214 *Ibid.*, 0920 (Nadre Atto).



explained that newly resettled Yazidis frequently talk about family members back in Iraq.²¹⁵ Ms. Abdallah advocated for “a program for the Yazidis to reconnect with family members left in Iraq to have them come and join them here in Canada.”²¹⁶ Mr. Weiss explained that prioritizing opportunities of family reunification plays an important role in successful integration,²¹⁷ while Mr. Hesso stated that larger families appeared to be adapting more quickly than individuals or smaller families.²¹⁸ Mr. Barber stressed that, in light of feedback from the German resettlement experience, efforts must be made to resettle families together.²¹⁹

Prof. Labman commented on “the so-called echo effect” as resettled Yazidis work to bring over their extended families.²²⁰ According to her, family reunification for Yazidi women and children will “most commonly occur through private sponsorship, although UNHCR has indicated it is receiving names directly from Canadian NGOs, which would funnel into the GAR Program.”²²¹

As such, the Committee recommends:

Supporting Family Reunification

Recommendation 12

That Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada support family reunification for survivors of Daesh by considering extending indefinitely the One-Year Window of Opportunity for them to include immediate family members found to be living; and continue to expedite the applications of immediate family members.

In conclusion, the Committee would like to thank the individuals, local and international organizations and departments who contributed to the resettlement of Yazidi women and children in Canada. The witnesses have provided the Committee with valuable insight into the daily work and challenges of resettlement services.

215 CIMM, *Evidence*, 9 November 2017, 0900 (Hadji Hesso).

216 CIMM, *Evidence*, 9 November 2017, 0905 (Dalal Abdallah).

217 CIMM, *Evidence*, 9 November 2017, 0855 (Lorne Weiss).

218 CIMM, *Evidence*, 9 November 2017, 0855 (Hadji Hesso).

219 Matthew Travis Barber, *Written submission*, p. 8.

220 CIMM, *Evidence*, 30 November 2017, 1005 (Shauna Labman).

221 Ibid.

APPENDIX A LIST OF WITNESSES

| Organizations and Individuals | Date | Meeting |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|---------|
| <p>Department of Citizenship and Immigration</p> <p>Dawn Edlund, Associate Assistant Deputy Minister Operations</p> <p>Jean-Marc Gionet, Acting Senior Director Resettlement Operations, International Network</p> <p>Corinne Prince, Director General Settlement and Integration Policy Branch</p> <p>Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development</p> <p>Sean Boyd, Executive Director Middle East Relations</p> <p>Tara Carney, Director International Humanitarian Assistance Operations</p> <p>Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees</p> <p>Jean-Nicolas Beuze, Representative in Canada</p> | 2017/11/07 | 82 |
| <p>As individuals</p> <p>Payam Akhavan, Associate Professor Faculty of Law, McGill University</p> <p>Matthew Travis Barber</p> <p>Operation Ezra</p> <p>Nafiya Naso, Working Committee Member</p> <p>Lorne Weiss, Working Committee Member</p> <p>Yazda</p> <p>Dalal Abdallah, Yezidi Human Rights Activist</p> <p>Haider Elias, President</p> <p>Nadia Murad Basee Taha, President Nadia Murad Initiative</p> <p>Yazidi Association of Manitoba</p> <p>Hadji Hesso, Director</p> | 2017/11/09 | 83 |

| Organizations and Individuals | Date | Meeting |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|----------------|
| Yezidi Human Rights Organization-International Mirza Ismail, Founder and President Canada Section | 2017/11/09 | 83 |
| As individuals Omar Khoudeida Shauna Labman, Assistant Professor University of Manitoba Shannon Smith | 2017/11/30 | 88 |
| Cultural Interpretation Services for Our Communities Benjamin Chacon, Executive Director Interpretation Services Rania Tabet, Services Manager Interpretation and Translation Services | | |
| Multi-Languages Corporation Lola Bendana, Director | | |
| Refugee 613 Louisa Taylor, Director | | |
| South London Neighbourhood Resource Centre Mohamed Al-Adeimi, Director Newcomer Settlement Services | | |
| As individuals Nadre Atto Andrew Clifford, Director, Master of Conference Interpreting Glendon College, York University Aveen Ismail Lobat Sadrehashemi, Lawyer | 2017/12/05 | 89 |
| Mozuud Freedom Foundation Debbie Rose, Manager Project Abraham Gary Rose, Director of Communications Project Abraham | | |

APPENDIX B LIST OF BRIEFS

Organizations and Individuals

Barber, Matthew Travis

Boldt, Natalie

Calgary Catholic Immigration Society

Canadian Council for Refugees

COSTI Immigrant Services

Language Industry Association

London Cross Cultural Learner Centre

Mozuud Freedom Foundation

Mozuud RSVP

One Free World International

Ontario Council on Community Interpreting

Operation Ezra

Tawfiq, Haifa

Yazda

REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the Committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this Report.

A copy of the relevant *Minutes of Proceedings* ([Meetings Nos. 82, 83, 88, 89, 95, 96 and 99](#)) is tabled.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert Oliphant
Chair

**Supplementary Report of Her Majesty's Official Opposition
the Conservative Party of Canada
Briefing on Resettlement Issues Related to Yazidi Women and Girls**

Larry Maguire, Member of Parliament for Brandon – Souris

Michelle Rempel, Member of Parliament for Calgary Nose Hill

David Tilson, Member of Parliament for Dufferin-Caledon

I want you all just for one moment—one moment—to be able to get out of those suits and think for one moment of the pain and struggle Yazidis are going through. Right now, as we speak, there is a girl screaming for our help. As a proud Canadian, I beg you to open your hearts and your doors to the Yazidis.¹

To the credit of the government, the resettlement of Yazidis required a new way of thinking and a new way of doing things. In order to identify Yazidis, the government had to overcome the technical problem of resettling internally displaced persons (IDPs); this is something that the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) does not normally do. This posed a problem, as Canada primarily relies on the UNHCR for our refugee resettlement lists. Overcoming this obstacle was the first step that needed to take place.

Yet, the government gave the impression that they were developing a specialized program for Yazidis to deal with their specific and extensive trauma once they arrived in Canada. The State Ministry of Baden-Württemberg in Germany, which was the first jurisdiction to develop such a program, shared their best practices with the Canadian government in 2016.² When questioned at committee, officials from Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship could not explain how their settlement plan for Yazidis differed in any way from other refugee groups.³ This is perplexing given the acknowledgement in the same meeting that Yazidis have suffered immensely, as Sean Boyd, Executive Director, Middle East Relations, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development, stated:

The Yazidis have suffered horrendous atrocities at the hands of Daesh. The United Nations' Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic has found that these acts of violence constitute genocide. Members of the Yazidi community have told us that they do not feel safe and that they continue to fear Daesh sleeper cells and other forms of religious extremism.⁴

¹ CIMM, *Evidence*, 9 November 2017, 0915 (Dalal Abdallah).

² CIMM, *Evidence*, 22 November 2016, 1015 (Dr. Michael Blume).

³ CIMM, *Evidence*, 7 November 2017, 0905, (Dawn Edlund).

⁴ CIMM, *Evidence*, 7 November 2017, 0905 (Sean Boyd).

The committee's meetings regarding the resettlement of Yazidis were an opportunity to identify the successes and failures of the initiative, to develop an understanding of best practices, and to improve the ongoing issues Yazidis are having. However, the committee's report failed to adequately do this. We hope that this supplementary report will fill those gaps.

Interpretation

The committee heard that the availability and accessibility of interpretation services was an issue for resettled Yazidis. COSTI Immigrant Services told the committee that of the Yazidis they worked with in Toronto, "two-thirds of the group speak varying levels of Arabic, however prefer to communicate in Kurmanji. The remaining one-third speak Kurmanji only."⁵ COSTI has attempted to identify new Kurmanji interpreters to assist in the resettlement, but they still do not have enough to meet the demand. This has detrimental implications for a newcomer's ability to integrate. COSTI noted that there are no Kurmanji-speaking mental health professionals in the GTA, and that there are waitlists for Arabic services.⁶ Without access to these vital services, Canada is failing the Yazidi people in their process of resettlement.

It is also necessary to be sensitive to the trauma of Yazidis in the provision of interpretation, specifically; it cannot be assumed that Yazidis are willing or able to communicate in Arabic. The committee heard that for some Yazidis, meeting with Arabic speaking government translators in Canada added to their confusion and fear. Some even "thought they were back in the hands of ISIS," because this was the language of their former captors.⁷

It should also be highlighted that interpreters must be certified as there have been concerns raised privately that interpreters may not be translating the desires of the individual accurately.

Mental Health Support

Yazidis survivors of genocide have suffered unimaginable trauma. Many of the refugees settled in Canada have witnessed the murder of their immediate family members, have endured rape and torture and, have been the subject of discrimination and dehumanization. COSTI noted that once a refugee's funding under the Interim Federal Health Program expires, they are put on a waitlist for social assistance to access mental health services.⁸ This is problematic because the mental health needs of the community are long-term and ongoing.

The Conservatives were further concerned because we heard that the department cut funding that was earmarked for the provision of services to Yazidis. Dawn Edlund, Associate Assistant Deputy Minister, Operations, Department of Citizenship and Immigration, informed the committee that although Budget 2017 set out \$27.7 million for the initiative, they later cut this

⁵ CIMM, COSTI, [Briefing](#), pg 2.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ CIMM, Mozuud Freedom Foundation, [Briefing](#), pg 2

⁸ CIMM, COSTI, [Briefing](#), pg 3.

funding by several million.⁹ We were concerned by this because the federal government only provided individualized counselling to 5 of the Yazidis.¹⁰

Best Practices

The resettlement of Yazidis required innovative thinking and the development of new processes and programs. IRCC, as well as settlement organizations and private sponsors had to respond to this community's needs that differed from other refugee populations. This newly formed institutional knowledge could be useful to future resettlement initiatives. Therefore, knowledge transfer would be highly valuable for the development and maintenance of best practices. The London Cross Cultural Learner Centre recommended that settlement workers receive training to better understand how to deal with the level of trauma that Yazidis have and for best practices to be shared.¹¹ They noted that capacity and education needs to be built in host communities, with a special focus on the provision of mental health care. They stated: "It's important host communities understand current cultural profiles, experiences and complexities of newly migrating communities. We have had recent requests for education and training on this migration and commitment to resettlement."¹²

In a briefing submitted to the committee, COSTI gave an example of a particularly effective approach to language instruction that they were able to offer some families in Toronto. The Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) teaches newcomer mothers basic literacy in order to support the education needs of their children. This was uniquely placed to support the needs of Yazidi mothers. However, they noted that access to this program is only available in the City of Toronto and is not available for clients living in the York Region.¹³ It would be helpful for the government to empower organizations like COSTI to be able to share their success with other settlement organizations and to expand its reach.

Developing best practices is also helpful for the transportability of services and so that conflict between community organizations do not emerge. We have heard that there may be strife between organizations in Winnipeg who have different approaches in their settlement practices.

Family Reunification

We heard that since there are many survivors of the Yazidi genocide and newly rescued sex slaves that are only now able to leave the Islamic State, it is necessary to recognize the exceptional nature of their situation.¹⁴ Many already have family in Canada now, and others are unable to return home to Northern Iraq due to instability in the region, with no local durable

⁹ CIMM, [Evidence](#), 7 November 2017, 0905, (Dawn Edlund).

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² CIMM, London Cross Cultural Learner Centre, [Briefing](#), pg 5.

¹³ CIMM, COSTI, [Briefing](#), pg 2.

¹⁴ CIMM, London Cross Cultural Learner Centre, [Briefing](#), pg 5

solutions.¹⁵ They should be prioritized in Canada's refugee resettlement along with the prolonged ability for Yazidis to sponsor family to Canada.

Family reunification is a key area of concern for all refugees resettled in Canada, but we heard that Yazidi families have unique issues when trying to sponsor family. For example, family members are often undeclared on documentation given to IRCC because they were presumed dead or have disappeared.¹⁶ Under current regulations, those family members cannot be included under the One Year Window provisions even if they are located within their first year in Canada. COSTI stated:

It is not unusual for missing family members to be located after the One Year Window provision has passed, leaving few avenues for resettlement other than submitting a Humanitarian and Compassionate claim, which not only costs money to apply but also requires a lawyer to complete the application. Lastly, for extended family members still living in their home country (such as Iraq and Syria), there exists no mechanism to resettle refugees who are internally displaced, other than family class sponsorship, which has inherent barriers for refugees. UNHCR and the Refugee Sponsorship Training Program (RSTP) have confirmed that without official refugee documents, it is not possible to recommend Yezidi extended family members for resettlement in Canada. Needless to say, the stress of being disconnected from family overseas, especially when those family members continue to be in precarious situations, contributes to poorer health and settlement outcomes and makes it much more difficult for refugee newcomers to focus on the task of integrating into Canadian society.¹⁷

Operation Ezra echoed these comments.¹⁸ This challenge in terms of reunification of Yazidi families should be addressed immediately by the government.

Privately Sponsored Refugees

The committee heard that organizations have the resources necessary to sponsor additional Yazidis, but they are stymied by the cap on Sponsorship Agreement Holders. Lorne Weiss, Operation Ezra, told the committee that "one of our problems in terms of logistics is that we spend a lot of time looking for sponsorship agreement holders who have available quota to allow us to sponsor private families. That is a bigger challenge to us than raising the required funds to provide them with the year's support that's necessary."¹⁹ He further stated that the cap on sponsorship for Yazidis should be lifted because "the cap will be self-monitoring in essence because of the ability to raise funds."²⁰ This way, the only limit on the number of refugees that could be sponsored would be on the ability for sponsors to pay for them.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ CIMM, COSTI, *Briefing*, pg 3.

¹⁷ CIMM, COSTI, *Briefing*, pg 3-4.

¹⁸ CIMM, Operation Ezra, *Briefing*, pg 4.

¹⁹ CIMM, *Evidence*, 9 November 2017, 0855 (Lorne Weiss).

²⁰ Ibid.

Dalal Abdallah echoed this, “At this point, I think we should lift the cap entirely. I mean, we haven't done enough for the Yazidis, and we need to do that. This is the time.”²¹ Taking such measures would capitalize generosity of Canadians who want to help this vulnerable group, with very little cost to the taxpayer.

Government Assisted Refugees

Hadji Hesso expressed his disappointment with the number of Yazidis that have been resettled in Canada:

In February of this year, the Government of Canada promised to bring in 1,200 people. That's when it started, and up to today we've seen 650 people. Now we are almost two months away from the end of this year, and I don't know if we are going to reach that number. A couple of years back, when we had the Syrian civil war, they brought 25,000 Syrians to Canada. We cannot reach the 1,200 number of Yazidi people by the end of the year, when entire religious and minority groups such as Yazidis and Christians have been through all these massacres, raping, and killing. The United Nations has acknowledged that it's a genocide against humanity.²²

Most witnesses expressed their belief that Canada can and should do more, especially in light of the fact that the Government missed their target of resettling 1200 survivors of Daesh by the end of 2017.

The Yazidi Genocide

Speaking on behalf of a Yazidi refugee, Dalal Abdallah stated:

When I asked her what she wanted from the Canadian government, she said exactly what she wanted from Canada, and that is to keep the doors open and bring more survivors to Canada, to protect the ones who do not want to leave Shingal to be able to live a peaceful life, and lastly, to help provide any necessary aid to the families who are still in Iraq. The last thing she shared with me is that a lot of the refugees who come to Canada have been separated from their families back in Iraq. We would like a program for the Yazidis to reconnect with family members left in Iraq to have them come and join them here in Canada.²³

The Conservative Party echoes these desires for the Yazidi community. It should also be noted that on October 25, 2016 the House of Commons unanimously voted in favour of a motion to respond to the Yazidi genocide. This included the acceptance of recommendations 210, 212, and 213 in the 2016 report by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human

²¹ CIMM, [Evidence](#), 9 November 2017, 0930 (Dalal Abdallah)

²² CIMM, [Evidence](#), 9 November 2017, 0905 (Hadji Hesso)

²³ CIMM, [Evidence](#), 9 November 2017, 0910 (Dalal Abdallah)

Rights entitled “They Came To Destroy: ISIS Crimes Against Yazidis.” Matthew Barber and a number of other witnesses recommended that the government provide a response to Parliament on its efforts to meet and take actions on those recommendations.²⁴

Recommendations

1. That IRCC examine the possibility of developing a nimble response network for the provision of transportation and interpretation services to connect government contracted settlement service organizations and refugees with non-profit organizations that have those resources available.
2. That IRCC lift the sponsorship cap on Iraq and Syria for Sponsorship Agreement Holders for one year.
3. That IRCC continue to prioritize genocide survivors in future government assisted refugee cohorts.
4. That IRCC allow Yazidis to sponsor extended family members beyond the one year window given the exceptional circumstances.
5. That the Government organize a conference to bring service providers together to discuss best practices.
6. That IRCC extend the special program for internally displaced Yazidis to be resettled in Canada.
7. That the Government of Canada ask the United Nations to undertake a follow-up study to the 2016 report entitled “They Came to Destroy: ISIS Crimes Against Yazidis” to look at what has been achieved by the global community, and to provide recommendations to the global community and member states for the support of the Yazidis.
8. That the Government of Canada table an update to Parliament on its efforts to meet and take actions on recommendations 210, 212, and 213 in the 2016 report entitled “They Came to Destroy” as was voted unanimously in the House of Commons in 2016.

²⁴ CIMM, [Evidence](#), 9 November 2017, 1050 (Matthew Travis Barber)

Supplementary Report by the New Democratic Party of Canada

Preface

The Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration (CIMM) first moved to study the atrocities committed against the Yazidi people by ISIS in July of 2016, which was undertaken as an emergency study during the summer. That study was broadened to examine how Canada can best support vulnerable groups in inaccessible areas in order to acknowledge that tragically, other groups face similar existential threats globally, but it is clear from the minutes of the 21st meeting of CIMMⁱ that this study was initiated as a result of the United Nations report, *They came to destroy: ISIS Crimes Against the Yazidis*. Released on June 16, 2016, that report declares that ISIS has attempted to commit the crime of genocide against the Yazidi peopleⁱⁱ.

The Committee's report, *Distress Call: How Canada's Immigration Program can Respond to Reach the Displaced and Most Vulnerable*, provided five broad recommendations for how Canada better engage with our global partners on ensuring the most vulnerable and displaced people are resettledⁱⁱⁱ. Additionally, the New Democratic Party provided a supplementary opinion urging the government to undertake a special measure utilizing credible, on the ground organizations to identify and select victims of genocide for resettlement in Canada. These measures are to be above and beyond any pre-existing initiatives and/or policies^{iv}.

New Democrats were deeply disappointed that coming out of that study the government took no such initiative. To further pursue this, on October 20, 2016, the Conservative Party of Canada tabled the following motion:

That the House (a) recognize that ISIS is committing genocide against the Yazidi people; (b) acknowledge that many Yazidi women and girls are still being held captive by ISIS as sexual slaves; (c) recognize that the government has neglected to provide this House with an appropriate plan and the corresponding action required to respond to this humanitarian crisis; (d) support recommendations found in the June 15, 2016 report issued by United Nations Commission of Inquiry on Syria entitled, "They came to destroy: ISIS Crimes Against the Yazidis"; and (e) call on the government to (i) take immediate action upon all the recommendations found in section 210, 212, and 213 of said report, (ii) use its full authority to provide asylum to Yazidi women and girls within 30 days.^v

Following the passing of this motion unanimously in House of Commons, New Democrats moved a motion at the 35th meeting of CIMM, October 27, 2016. With amendments by the committee, it was ultimately agreed upon that:

Pursuant to Standing 108(2) and in light of the House of Commons unanimously voting in favour of the motion for the Canadian government to use its full authority to provide asylum to Yazidi women and girls who are escaping genocide within 120 days, the Committee undertake a study and invite officials from the German government that led the German initiative to expeditiously resettle 1,000 Yazidi women and girls so that Canada could learn from their experiences; that departmental officials who travelled to Iraq brief the Committee on their experience at an *in camera* meeting; that this study be comprised of one meeting to be held as soon as possible; that the Committee report its findings to the House; and that pursuant to Standing Order 109, the government table a comprehensive response thereto.^{vi}

The committee then sent a private letter to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship coming out of a three meeting study which occurred over November 17, 22, and December 1, 2016. The New Democratic and Conservative Party members of CIMM then jointly sent then Minister, the Hon. John McCallum, P.C., an additional, open letter on December 20, 2016.

Introduction

It is the firm belief of New Democrats that when there is an exceptional crisis, an exceptional response is required. The crime of genocide is such a crisis. In November 2017, the government announced that Canada will resettle 1,200 Yazidi people by end of 2017. While any action taken by Canada is commendable; New Democrats are disappointed that this was not undertaken as a special measure above and beyond what was stipulated in the immigration level plan target for Government Assisted Refugees (GARs). In fact, the 1,200 Yazidi was folded into the 25,000 GARs under the Syrian Refugee Initiative. As of 29 January 2017, the government reports that 21,876 GARs from Syrian have arrived in Canada, 3,124 short of the 25,000 commitment^{vii}. On January 16, 2018, it was reported that the government did not reach its goal of resettling 1,200 Yazidi. By the end of 2017, only 981 government sponsored refugees (GARs) had arrived in Canada, 795 of them Yazidi^{viii}.

From this study, we also learned that there were significant issues in the Yazidi resettlement efforts. New Democrats believe that the recommendations stemming from the main report and this supplementary report should be undertaken immediately to ensure Yazidi people resettled in Canada can effectively rebuild their lives here in safety. As this study builds on the work of previous studies, New Democrats believe that the series of studies undertaken by CIMM on this subject should be taken together and the recommendations should be used as a blueprint to improve upon the resettlement process for refugees that are in Canada now and for future initiatives. This is the approach that New Democrats have brought to these studies and this initiative from the outset. Witnesses appearing before the committee also supported this

broad approach. It is with this in mind that New Democrats, while supporting the recommendations in the main report, submit this supplementary report.

Refugee Sponsorship

The humanitarian spirit amongst Canadians is something that we can all be proud of. This was truly put on display during the Syrian refugee crisis, which as of 29 January 2017, saw Canadians sponsor 14,274 refugees through IRCC's Privately Sponsored Refugee (PSR) program. While the desire of Canadians to engage in this program has not waned, the government's targets for PSR have artificially limited Canadians abilities to act. The immigration levels plan allocations for PSRs have dropped from 17,800 in 2016^{ix} to 16,000 in 2017^x. While the increase over the 2018-2020 levels plans of 18,000 in 2018 to 20,000 in 2020 are welcomed^{xi}, the sponsorship community has been vocal throughout many CIMM studies relating to refugees, and specifically Yazidi's, that there is a capacity and desire to do more.

Mr. Lorne Weiss of Operation Ezra explained:

“One of our problems in terms of logistics is that we spend a lot of time looking for sponsorship agreement holders who have available quota to allow us to sponsor private families. That is a bigger challenge to us than raising the required funds to provide them with the year's support that's necessary. We need more sponsorship agreement holders in major centres where there are already Yazidi communities in existence. We need more quota as well.”^{xii}

Lifting the cap on the number of Yazidi people that could be sponsored to come to Canada was an idea supported by Mr. Omar Khoudeida and Ms. Shannon Smith^{xiii}. Ms. Nafiya Naso, Mr. Hadji Hesso, Ms. Dala Abdallah, and Mr. Weiss^{xiv} noted that this should go beyond just Yazidi populations. Further, Mr. Weiss believes, “the cap will be self-monitoring in essence because of the ability to raise funds”^{xv}. This is because sponsorship agreement holders must demonstrate that they have the funds to be eligible to sponsor an additional refugee, and therefore would not be able to over-extend in their resettlement efforts.

New Democrats continue to be proud of the humanitarian spirit of Canadians in their efforts to help resettle refugees and believe that the government should not be artificially limiting Canadians' ability to do more. It is with this in mind that New Democrats recommend:

Recommendation One:

The Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada lift the cap on Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSRs).

Family Reunification

In the main report there is a recommendation to expand the timeline indefinitely for resettled Yazidi refugees to sponsor immediate family members through the One-Year Window of Opportunity program (OYW). While New Democrats support this recommendation, it has been brought to the Committee's attention during this study that the OYW program has other limitations that should be addressed. As well, witnesses from other studies and stakeholder organizations have echoed the same view.

The OYW offers reunification only of immediate family members. That is, spouses/common-law partners; dependent children; and dependent children of dependent children. Given the violence and conflict that many refugees are fleeing, especially in the case of Yazidis, it is possible that all members of a principal applicant's immediate family are deceased. However, they may come to find out that a sibling, an uncle or aunt, a cousin, or a niece or nephew is still alive. In some cases it could be that the only other surviving members of the family are extended family members.

Ms. Debbie Rose of Project Abraham recommended that the government:

“Extend the one-year window of opportunity provision for victims of genocide to include family members who are discovered to be alive after the refugee families have immigrated to Canada. In addition, for the special needs of this community, extend this provision to siblings and parents.”^{xvi}

During the CIMM study of family reunification, members of the committee were informed that by immigration lawyer Chantal Desloges that:

“The concept of the nuclear family being just two parents with children is largely a western European construct. It is not the norm in most of the world and particularly in areas of the world from which most of our newcomers in Canada originate. However, it's exactly on that construct that we've built our definition of family in the immigration and refugee protection regulations. Maybe it's time to rethink that.”^{xvii}

In her appearance before the committee, Ms. Lobat Sadrehashemi spoke of the importance of family reunification in the resettlement process, as well as its impact on healing from trauma:

“You have heard from survivors and those who work with them in Canada that family separation is particularly devastating to those who have experienced severe trauma and been resettled. Family reunification has been recognized by the UNHCR and by the government as an essential step in refugee resettlement. The UNHCR has recognized the family as ‘an essential right of the refugee’ in its 1983 ‘Guidelines on Reunification of Refugee Families’

For refugees who survive trauma, separation from family can be especially difficult. Having the family together is absolutely critical to feeling safe and protected in one's new home."^{xviii}

While the following recommendation is one that the New Democratic Party provided in its supplementary report on the family reunification study, the NDP is once again making this recommendation given the high level of importance witnesses from this study placed on family reunification for the resettlement process.

Recommendation Two:

That Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada expand the definition of family under the family reunification program and the one-year window of opportunity sponsorship program for refugee claimants, so as to include siblings, cousins, uncles, aunts, nieces and nephews.

Increase Resettlement of Yazidi Refugees

During the vulnerable groups study, Mr. Murad Ismael spoke of his desire for Canada to resettle 5,000 to 10,000 Yazidis^{xix}. This recommendation was echoed by New Democrats in our supplementary opinion attached to the report on that study.^{xx} It had always been the desire of New Democrats for this first 1,200 target to be done quickly, with a commitment to reach that 5,000 to 10,000 goal. New Democrats were deeply disappointed when Ms. Dawn Edlund informed the committee that, "we have not received new direction for a further number of individuals to be sought from northern Iraq."^{xxi} In addition to their support of lifting the cap on PSP applications, witnesses appearing before the committee were also clear that an additional target of resettling at least 5,000 Yazidi refugees in Canada should be sought. Therefore, New Democrats recommend that:

Recommendation Three:

That Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada engage in a follow up special measure to resettle 5,000 Yazidi refugees in Canada.

Special Measures

There is no question that crimes against humanity in the situation of genocide require extraordinary action from the global community. Canada joined other countries such as Germany in response to this call for action. This is commendable. However, given that there is a global crisis where over 65 million are displaced across the globe; Canada's Yazidi initiative should not displace the resettlement work of other refugees from different countries.

Appearing before the committee, Mr. Omar Khoudeida, Ms. Shannon Smith, Mr. Mohamed Al-Adeimi, Mr. Hesso, Ms. Naso, Mr. Weiss, Ms. Debbie Rose, Mr. Gary Rose, and Ms. Lobat Sadrehashemi all agreed that the government should engage in an additional Yazidi refugee resettlement initiative.^{xxixxxiii} They all also agreed that this initiative should be above and beyond Canada's current target of 7,500 GARs.

With such widespread understanding and agreement of this situation, and with the forward thinking approach in mind, New Democrats therefore recommend the following:

Recommendation Four:

That Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada prioritize genocide for selecting refugees in resettlement through the use of special measures which go above and beyond planned resettlement targets.

Internally Displaced

Over the course of studies regarding vulnerable groups, and Yazidi's specifically at CIMM, the issue of internal displacement and the difficulty in reaching individuals in that situation have been brought up numerous times. During his appearing at CIMM for this study, Mr. Sean Boyd from the Department of Foreign Affairs outlined the situation of internal displacement in Iraq that is currently happening to the Yazidi population. "The conflict has created millions of internally displaced persons with estimates of approximately 400,000 Yazidis living in IDP camps or in host communities."^{xxv} Additionally, Mr. Mirza Ismail of Yezidi Human Rights Organization-International called upon the Canadian government to:

"Send humanitarian aid on an urgent basis directly to those internally displaced in Iraq. There is a real threat of starvation, dehydration, and disease, especially in Mount Sinjar. This assistance should come from neutral, non-governmental sources to avoid the diversion of food, water, and medicine."^{xxvi}

During the study of the 2011 LGBTQ+ Refugee Pilot Project study^{xxvii}, and the study of vulnerable groups^{xxviii}, New Democrats advanced recommendations for further examination of the role that Canada could play in addressing internal displacement globally in supplementary reports. Given what we have continued to hear, now entering a third study, regarding the complexities of addressing, and urgency for aid to provide to individuals who are internally displaced, New Democrats once again call upon the government to act.

Recommendation Five:

For Canada to increase humanitarian aid levels, targeted towards populations of internally displaced persons, and to work collaboratively on the ground with established groups working in those regions to ensure that aid reaches its target.

Recommendation Six:

That the Standing Committee for Citizenship and Immigration undertake on an urgent basis, a comprehensive study of the issue of internal displacement globally, and how Canada can best respond to the unique needs of internally displaced persons.

Resettlement Services

Following the CIMM study on the federal government's initiative to resettle Syrian refugees to Canada, the committee tabled the report, *After the Warm Welcome: Ensuring that Syrian Refugees Succeed* in the House of Commons. This report examined many of the difficulties encountered during the resettlement efforts and provided the government with 14 recommendations for improving resettlement efforts moving forward. At that time New Democrats included a dissenting opinion to the report as it was our opinion that the main report and its recommendations failed to adequately and thoroughly address the gaps in resettlement service funding and provision. As such, New Democrats made an additional 10 recommendations on the themes of: Transportation loans; Housing; Access to language training; Access to health services, and; Improving information provided to sponsors and refugees^{xxix}.

This was then followed by an Auditor General report on Settlement Service for Syrian refugees. This report found that while overall most Syrian refugees received needs assessments, language assessments, and language training; IRCC's slow dispersion of additional funding in 2017-18 to service providers resulted in some organizations being forced to cut services for at least 3 months. The report stated, "These findings matter because for Syrian refugees to integrate into Canadian society, they must be able to access the settlement services they need when they need them."^{xxx}

The committee heard testimony from several witnesses about similar issues with access to services for Yazidi refugees. However, it was also noted that given the Yazidi's unique culture and language; their extreme trauma at the hands of Daesh; and the small communities of Yazidi people already settled in Canada; the challenges faced by the Yazidis during the resettlement process were much more acute.

Yazidi's encountered difficulty accessing interpretation services due to the small number of qualified interpreters versed in their language, Kurmanji. This had a broad range of impacts on access to resettlement services, including trauma counselling. Ms. Abdallah explained, "One of

the barriers is that, because these are special services and because the second language is Kurmanji, it's very difficult to get accurate translation and have that passed on to psychiatrists and psychologists. It's very hard."^{xxxix} Echoing this sentiment, Ms. Smith recommended that "interpretation services be extended beyond six month, because communication is barrier to all other issues, such as transportation and mental health services"^{xxxix}.

Given the extreme trauma that has been experienced by many Yazidi's in Canada, it was also noted that it would not be uncommon for it to take longer than 6 months, or even a year for individuals to be ready to discuss and deal with this trauma. It is with this in mind that New Democrats recommend:

Recommendation Seven:

That Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada work with the provinces and territories to ensure that interpretation is available to those with language barriers while accessing public services.

Recommendation Eight:

That Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada extend the eligibility period for the Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP) to ensure that resettled refugees have access to mental health supports and services when they need it

Regarding language training specifically, during his appearance for this study Mr. Hesso noted that, "Adults all love attending English classes but often struggle to learn because of the impact of trauma. They appear to learn more through conversational groups where they make connections and build relationships with others."^{xxxix}

The recommendation of including funding for more informal conversational language training was one that was also brought to the attention of the committee during the study of Syrian refugee settlement, by Sherman Chan of the Canadian Council for Refugees^{xxxiv}. The need for more access to language training, including informal classes and services that included child-care was also noted during that study by Syrian refugees that appeared before the committee: Ms. Eman Allhalq^{xxxv} and Mr. Amer Alhendawi^{xxxvi}. In the report by the committee it was stated that, "A shortage of language classes that offer child minding was also raised, leading to a longer wait for women to access training, possibly resulting in extended periods of isolation."^{xxxvii}

At the time, in the New Democratic Party's made the following recommendation:

"That Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) enhances program delivery by funding more adaptable language class programs. Increased funding should be given

to programs which also have childcare/child-minding services, offer information conversation groups, and programs which provide resettlement help within the context of language skill building”^{xxxviii}

Therefore, New Democrats similarly recommend again:

Recommendation Nine:

That Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada provide funding to resettlement services organizations to provide opportunities for conversational English/French programs and events to ensure that vulnerable refugees, especially women, do not experience isolation; and that more language training courses provide childcare/child-minding services

Finally, Mr. Ismail informed committee members that some Yazidi refugees were not receiving all of their entitled benefits; namely, the Canada Child Benefit (CCB):

“Some families, including Ms. Basema – who is supposed to be here but, unfortunately, due to personal issues, she couldn’t – have been in Canada for more than four months and still have not received their child tax benefit. Until that happens, the amount of the money allocated to families barely covers the rent, let alone food and other expenses.”^{xxxix}

Many of Canada’s cities experience a high cost of living. Given that the established income support provided to resettled refugees is that of the prevailing social assistance rates in their province of resettlement, refugees, even with all the income support they can access can have difficulty making ends meet. It is therefore paramount to ensure that they immediate access to all of these benefits. Therefore, New Democrats recommend:

Recommendation Ten:

That the Government of Canada immediately correct issues with the provision of the Canada Child Benefit (CCB) to ensure refugee families receive this income support as soon as possible.

Conclusion:

New Democrats welcomed the opportunity to examine how the efforts on the Yazidi resettlement initiative have progressed. New Democrats have been supportive of undertaking such an important issue since the UN declared genocide was ongoing against this community in early 2016. While we are disappointed that after waiting so long for action, the government did not undertake to bring in a special measure for the Yazidi’s initiative and failed to reach its target; and that many of the resettlement issues the committee brought to the attention of the government during the Syrian refugee initiative remain and are in some cases more significant

for the resettlement of Yazidi people; we acknowledge that some action has been taken. If we truly want to learn from these experiences and to improve on our approach in the resettlement process, New Democrats hope that the series of studies on this issue undertaken by this committee, and the recommendations brought forward to the government, will be used as a blue print moving forward to remedy existing challenges and to provide an improved response to future initiatives.

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- ⁱ [CIMM, Minutes, 1st session, 42nd Parliament, 16 June 2016](#)
- ⁱⁱ [“They came to destroy: ISIS Crimes Against the Yazidis”, United Nations Human Rights Council, 15 June 2016](#)
- ⁱⁱⁱ [“Distress Call: How Canada’s Immigration Program Can Respond to Reach the Displaced and Most Vulnerable”, CIMM, Report 6, 5 October 2016, page 37](#)
- ^{iv} [“Distress Call: How Canada’s Immigration Program Can Respond to Reach the Displaced and Most Vulnerable”, CIMM, Report 6, 5 October 2016, page 58](#)
- ^v [House of Commons Debates, Volume 148, Number 094, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 20 October 2016, 10:10](#)
- ^{vi} [CIMM, Minutes, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 27 October 2016](#)
- ^{vii} [#WelcomeRefugees: Key Figures. Government of Canada](#)
- ^{viii} [Harris, Kathleen, “Liberals miss deadline to resettle ISIS survivors of rape, genocide due to flight restrictions”, CBC News, 16 January 2016](#)
- ^{ix} [Notice-Supplementary Information 2016 Immigration Levels Plan, Government of Canada](#)
- ^x [Notice-Supplementary Information 2017 Immigration Levels Plan, Government of Canada](#)
- ^{xi} [Notice-Supplementary Information 2018-2020 Immigration Levels Plan, Government of Canada](#)
- ^{xii} CIMM, Evidence, 1st session, 42nd Parliament, 9 November 2017, 08:53
- ^{xiii} CIMM, Evidence, 1st session, 42nd Parliament, 30 November 2017, 09:30
- ^{xiv} CIMM, Evidence, 1st session, 42nd Parliament, 9 November 2017. 09:33
- ^{xv} CIMM, Evidence, 1st session, 42nd Parliament 9 November 2017 09:25
- ^{xvi} Ibid.,
- ^{xvii} CIMM, Evidence, 1st session, 42nd Parliament, 27 October 2016, 15:36
- ^{xviii} CIMM, Evidence, 1st session, 42nd Parliament, 5 December 2017 09:05
- ^{xix} CIMM, Evidence, 1st session, 42nd Parliament, 19 July 2016 10:25
- ^{xx} [“Distress Call: How Canada’s Immigration Program Can Respond to Reach the Displaced and Most Vulnerable”, CIMM, Report 6, 5 October 2016, page 58](#)
- ^{xxi} CIMM, Evidence, 1st session, 42nd Parliament, 7 November 2017 09:25
- ^{xxii} CIMM, Evidence, 1st session, 42nd Parliament, 9 November 2017 09:35
- ^{xxiii} CIMM, Evidence, 1st session, 42nd Parliament, 30 November 2017 09:35
- ^{xxiv} CIMM, Evidence, 1st session, 42nd Parliament, 5 December 2017 09:55
- ^{xxv} CIMM, Evidence, 1st session, 42nd Parliament, 7 November 2017 08:55
- ^{xxvi} CIMM, Evidence, 1st session, 42nd Parliament 9 November 2017 10:25
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- ^{xxix} [“After the Warm Welcome: Ensuring that Syrian Refugees Succeed”, CIMM, Report 7, 1 November 2016, page 61](#)
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