

10 Demands, Years After the Genocide by ISIL



Report
August 2024

10 years after the genocide committed by ISIL, and three years after the passage of the Yazidi Survivors' Law (YSL) by Iraq's parliament, survivors from across Iraq's diverse communities continue to face systemic barriers to their recovery. A decade after experiencing brutal violence, captivity, and displacement, and while more than 2,600 Yazidis remain missing, the threat of camp closures for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) and a lack of durable solutions loom over the anniversary.

This report was developed in consultation with the members of the Coalition for Just Reparations (C4JR), with lead authors Alannah Travers and Saber Saeed (Jiyan Foundation), Kristin Perry and Marley Tinnock (SEED Foundation), and Zoé Paris (Yazda), with support from Mairéad Smith (C4JR consultant).

This report would not have been possible without the invaluable contributions of C4JR's members (see below), in particular: Better World Organization, DAK Organization, Farida Global Organization (FGO), Free Yezidi Foundation (FYF), House of Coexistence, Justice Organisation for Minority Rights (JOMR), and Jiyan Foundation for Human Rights, who conducted consultations with various survivor groups, and whose findings are the basis of this report; and Yazda, who provided data from their own assessment with survivors to inform the report.



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The Coalition for Just Reparations (C4JR) is an alliance of NGOs based in Iraq who came together to call for comprehensive reparations for survivors of atrocity crimes perpetrated during the ISIL conflict, seeking to provide a collaborative and safe space where the grievances of survivors belonging to all affected groups – including Yazidi, Turkmen, Shabak, Kakai, Christians, Shia, Sunnis, and others – could be adequately addressed.

Jiyan Foundation for Human Rights, a charitable organisation, supports survivors of human rights violations, defends fundamental freedoms, and promotes democratic values worldwide. The Jiyan Foundation provides mental health and medical treatment, along with other support services, to survivors of trauma, terror, domestic violence, and human rights violations throughout Kurdistan, Iraq, and Syria.

SEED Foundation is a local NGO in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, committed to protecting, empowering, and supporting survivors of violence and others at risk. Our approach to this mission is integrative and holistic. We provide quality and comprehensive services, including mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), legal, protection, and shelter services; training, capacity building, and education for those working to protect and serve survivors; and policy and advocacy to strengthen laws, policies, practices, and protections for vulnerable people, and to promote social change.

Yazda was established in 2014, three weeks after the genocidal campaign commenced in Sinjar and was among the first organisations on the ground providing lifesaving assistance to survivors. Yazda was the first actor to document the crimes committed by ISIL against Yazidis and has been leading advocacy efforts on justice and accountability. Since its inception, Yazda has managed a portfolio of humanitarian, justice and rights-based projects, which are community and survivor-centred in design and implementation.

Contact:

www.c4jr.org
info@c4jr.org

Design: Saber Saeed

Cover: [Hisham Haji](#)

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Acronyms

C4JR	Coalition for Just Reparations
CSO(s)	Civil society organisation(s)
GDSA	General Directorate for Survivors' Affairs
GoI	Government of Iraq
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
IDP(s)	Internally Displaced Person(s)
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ISIL	The self-declared Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
KRG	Kurdistan Regional Government
KRI	Kurdistan Region of Iraq
MGD	Mass Graves Directorate
MHPSS	Mental Health and Psycho-Social Support
MLD	Medico-Legal Directorate
MoLSA	Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs
MoMD	Ministry of Migration and Displacement
NGO(s)	Non-profit organisation(s)
UN	United Nations
UNITAD	United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL
YSL	Yazidi Survivors' Law

Background

In order to amplify survivors' needs and demands ten years after the genocide, eight member organisations of the C4JR conducted a series of consultations with the four communities recognised as eligible under the Yazidi Survivors' Law (YSL), specifically: Yazidis, Christians, Shabak, and Turkmen.

Nine of the ten consultations were conducted expressly for this purpose. Participants were aged between 20 to 47, and included both men and women living in camp and non-camp settings in Iraq, as well as abroad.

Yazda provided key findings from a previous assessment conducted with Yazidi survivors of different age groups and genders, living in camp and non-camp settings in Iraq, as well as abroad. For the purpose of this report, this is counted as one consultation.

C4JR prioritised consultations with Yazidi, Turkmen, Christian, and Shabak survivors in recognition of the disproportionate impact of the ISIL genocide within these historically marginalised communities and their subsequent inclusion within Iraq's key response framework, the YSL. The authors recognise, however, that survivors of ISIL come from many different communities across Iraq, and that parallel mechanisms are needed, outside of the YSL, to facilitate recovery and ensure durable solutions for all affected survivors.

Although these consultations were designed to identify shared demands in order to build solidarity and facilitate unified advocacy, it is important to note that there is a diversity of opinion, both within and among survivor groups, on some of these topics. The authors recognise that survivor communities are not monolithic, and that the perspectives captured in this report are not necessarily reflective of the whole.

Finally, while this report was informed by consultations with survivors, and consultation findings are explicitly identified in each section, the opinions expressed elsewhere are those of C4JR and the authors, and should not be otherwise attributed.

Executive Summary

Ten years after the self-proclaimed Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) invaded Iraq and started its genocidal campaign, the impact of this cataclysmic event is still deeply felt, and the consequences and root causes of the conflict remain largely unaddressed. Despite the passage of the Yazidi Survivors' Law (YSL) in 2021, which aimed to address some of the systemic issues faced by survivors from the Yazidi, Turkmen, Christian, and Shabak communities, many remain in a state of vulnerability.

To commemorate the tenth anniversary of the genocide waged by ISIL against Iraq's diverse communities, the Coalition for Just Reparations (C4JR) with Jiyan Foundation for Human Rights, SEED Foundation, and Yazda, has developed a list of ten core demands, identified through a series of consultations with survivors. These demands, which reflect the perspectives of those with different ethnic and religious backgrounds, ages, genders, and geographical locations, aim to identify the unmet needs that remain the highest priority for survivors.

- 1. Ensure the Safety, Security, and Protection of Minorities, and Prevent Violence**
- 2. Provide Free and Accessible Healthcare**
- 3. Address the Fate of Kidnapped and Missing Individuals and the Exhumation of Mass Graves**
- 4. Support Survivors' Economic Independence**
- 5. Promote Justice and Accountability at the National and International Level**
- 6. Secure a Safe, Dignified, and Voluntary End to Displacement**
- 7. Ensure All Eligible Survivor Groups Can Equitably Access Reparations**
- 8. Facilitate Access to Education**
- 9. Pursue Recognition of the Genocide by the International Community**
- 10. Fully Implement the Yazidi Survivors' Law (YSL)**

Many of these demands reinforce the relevance and importance of the reparations measures envisioned under the YSL, validating this as an essential response framework designed in consultation with survivor communities, and underscoring the need for sustained attention on the law until full implementation is achieved.

By consolidating the demands in this report, we hope to raise awareness of the current situation of survivors living in Iraq and abroad, and advocate for robust solutions to alleviate their suffering. Addressing these needs is crucial for the long-term recovery, stability, and dignity of survivors belonging to all affected groups.

10 survivor demands, 10 years after the genocide by ISIL

Ten years after the genocide committed by the self-proclaimed Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), and three years after the passage of the Yazidi Survivors' Law (YSL) by the Iraqi Parliament, survivors from across Iraq's diverse communities continue to face systemic barriers to their recovery. A decade after experiencing brutal violence, captivity, and displacement, survivors' unmet needs have profound implications for the prospects of closure, healing, and reintegration.

After gaining control of large swaths of territory in Syria in the preceding years, ISIL advanced into Iraq in 2014, claiming its first victory with the capture of Fallujah on January 4, and launching an offensive in the northern part of the country on June 4 with an attack on Mosul. Among the most notorious elements of the ISIL offensive was the invasion of Sinjar on August 3, marking the start of its widely recognised genocidal campaign against the Yazidi community. The events of 2014 initiated a reign of terror that primarily, although not exclusively, affected Yazidis and other ethnic and religious minority groups, including members of the Christian, Turkmen, and Shabak communities. During its campaign in Iraq, ISIL committed a litany of atrocities that included mass murder, executions, abductions, the sexual enslavement of women and girls, pillaging, extortion, seizure of state resources, smuggling, and the destruction of religious and cultural sites. Thousands of women and children were taken captive and subjected to unimaginable violence, and at least 30,000 civilians were killed, 55,000 injured, and over three million displaced. To date, more than 2,600 kidnapped Yazidis and an unknown number of survivors from other communities remain missing.

A decade on, with the threat of camp closures, the future remains uncertain for approximately 160,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) still living in protracted displacement across the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI)¹. For those who have returned to their areas of origin, safety concerns, a lack of access to education and civil documentation, inadequate healthcare services, and limited employment opportunities render durable solutions elusive. And for many survivors of ISIL – whether in Iraq or abroad – the yearning for broader recognition of their suffering and concerted action for justice and accountability looms over the anniversary.

¹ Travers, Alannah, 2024. "The UN's Humanitarian Transition from Emergency Assistance to Development Funding in Iraq: The Politics of Delivering Aid in a Country of Protracted Post-Conflict Displacement" (PeaceRep Research Paper). Middle East Centre, London School of Economics, May 30, 2024. Available at: <https://peacerep.org/publication/the-uns-humanitarian-transition-from-emergency-assistance-to-development-funding-in-iraq/>.

1 Ensure the Safety, Security, and Protection of Minorities, and Prevent Violence

While 80 percent of the six million Iraqis who fled their homes between 2014 and 2017 have now returned, over one million remain internally displaced.² The lack of a stable and secure environment in areas of origin hinders the ability of returnees to rebuild their lives and deters others from returning home.

Despite military efforts to eradicate ISIL from Iraq, sleeper cells and the presence of other armed groups across the country continue to pose a significant risk. In some areas of origin, tensions remain high, existing security arrangements are inadequate, and armed groups have proliferated, causing returning families to live in fear of renewed violence. Ongoing security threats in these areas contribute to feelings of instability, growing distrust in local and national authorities, and a perceived lack of safety. This is particularly evident in and around historically disputed territories, such as Sinjar, Tel Afar, and Nineveh Plains, where protracted territorial and governance disputes have impeded the development of strong, accountable, and representative security infrastructure.

Consultation Findings:

“We are still living in camps and we do not feel safe.” — Yazidi Survivor

“We still have some fear of a repeat of what happened in 2014 due to the complete instability of the situation in general.” — Turkmen Survivor

“[We are]... unable to travel outside the Nineveh Plain region because of our fear of the sleeper cells of the terrorist organisation ISIL, and after our face became familiar to the residents of the city of Mosul during the period of captivity.” — Christian Survivor

“We need to strengthen security in minority areas to prevent a repeat of what happened in 2014.” — Shabak Survivor

Survivors from all four communities underlined the dire security situation in the country, as well as in their areas of origin, and emphasised the need for comprehensive security measures to protect minorities and minority areas, and to

² IOM, 2024. “IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix,” IOM Data Portal, April 30, 2024. Available at: <https://iraqdtm.iom.int>.

prevent the recurrence of violence. In all consultations conducted with participants living in Iraq, the need for safety and protection was repeatedly raised, with a particular focus among Yazidis on stabilising the security situation in Sinjar.

C4JR Recommendations:

Prioritise the protection, safety, and security of minority groups in Iraq, and ensure conflict-affected areas are stabilised and safe ahead of return, by:

1. Exploring tactical and sustainable multi-stakeholder strategies for the removal of armed groups from conflict-affected areas.
2. Supporting the collaborative development of comprehensive security plans, in consultation with local communities and informed by best practices, with a focus on building resilient and representative security infrastructure.
3. Prioritising awareness-raising and capacity-building of security forces on diversity, cultural sensitivity, and promotion of tolerance to prevent violence against minorities.

2 Provide Free and Accessible Healthcare

The severe, extensive, and multifaceted violence perpetrated by ISIL has had long-lasting impacts on the physical and mental health of survivors, their families, and the wider community. Many survivors continue to suffer from physical injuries, chronic illnesses, and psychological trauma resulting from their experiences during the conflict.

Following widespread destruction by ISIL, healthcare infrastructure in Sinjar and other affected areas within Nineveh remains underdeveloped. Existing facilities are poorly equipped, understaffed, and lack essential medical supplies. Access to specialised care in the most needed locations, including mental health support, is virtually non-existent, forcing survivors to travel long distances to receive basic medical treatment, which is a significant burden for those with limited financial resources. The lack of comprehensive, long-term rehabilitation services for survivors not only impedes their recovery from trauma and increases the risk of re-traumatization, but also leaves them without the support needed to cope with their current circumstances.

Consultation Findings:

- “*Open permanent psychological support centres [...] for survivors and their families.*” — *Turkmen Survivor*
- “*Provide healthcare for [survivors], free of charge.*” — *Shabak Survivor*

Survivors from all four communities, including those resettled abroad, emphasised the need for free, accessible, and high quality rehabilitative services, including both mental and physical healthcare, to support recovery. Some recommended the establishment of permanent psychological support centres for survivors and their families in areas of residence, while others stressed that all healthcare services should be provided in a culturally sensitive manner by trained and qualified professionals, under the supervision of doctors and psychologists. Survivors underlined the need for government-sponsored healthcare, but recommended that additional services be provided by other actors, including NGOs, to address gaps.

C4JR Recommendations:

Ensure free and accessible medical services, including mental health services, for all survivors and their families, and in all areas of residence, by:

1. Investing in building and upgrading healthcare facilities in Sinjar, the Nineveh Plains, Tel Afar, and other areas where survivors reside, including hospitals, clinics, and specialised centres for trauma and mental health care.
2. Supporting capacity-building initiatives to train local healthcare professionals, provide them with necessary tools and resources, and ensure they are equipped to deliver sensitive and culturally-attuned services; foster a safe and enabling environment for recovery; and facilitate linkages to other support systems as needed for holistic care.
3. Facilitating collaboration between local healthcare providers, government agencies, and international health organisations to deliver comprehensive and coordinated healthcare services and enhance their quality and accessibility.

3 Address the Fate of Kidnapped and Missing Individuals and the Exhumation of Mass Graves

Approximately 2,600 kidnapped Yazidis and an unknown number of survivors from other communities are still unaccounted for, a decade after the genocide.³ Families and loved ones continue to endure the agony of uncertainty, awaiting any news that could shed light on the whereabouts or fate of those abducted. While a National Committee for Missing Persons has reportedly been established, much remains to be done to implement a comprehensive missing persons strategy.⁴

Over 200 mass grave sites in Iraq have been linked to ISIL, over 80 of which are located in Sinjar and the surrounding areas.⁵ Many are still in the process of being excavated.⁶ Exhumation efforts began in the years after the liberation of ISIL-controlled territories, especially after the establishment of the UN investigative team (UNITAD) and the Government of Iraq (GoI)'s declaration of military victory in 2017. However, the process of exhumation is complicated and time-intensive, and many families are still waiting for closure. In July 2024, exhumations at the Alo Antar mass grave in Tel Afar, containing victims from both the Yazidi and Turkmen communities, recovered the remains of 139 individuals, despite much higher initial estimates. The exhumation of mass graves and identification and return of remains are essential not only for closure and commemoration, but also as part of the broader transitional justice process in Iraq, including truth and reparations.

The imminent termination of UNITAD's mandate in September 2024 means that the international technical support provided to Iraqi forensic teams will end. Ongoing support to ensure that relevant Iraqi authorities, such as the Mass Graves Directorate (MGD), which sits under the Martyrs' Foundation, and the Ministry of Health's Medico-Legal Directorate (MLD), can continue carrying out exhumations and DNA matching at the same pace and quality is of critical importance.

³ Amnesty International, 2024. "Syria: Yazidi survivors of Islamic State atrocities abandoned to indefinite detention in north-east Syria." July 31, 2024. Available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/07/syria-yezidi-survivors-of-islamic-state-atrocities-abandoned-to-indefinite-detention-in-north-east-syria/>.

⁴ ReliefWeb, 2024. "Iraq Seeks to Enhance Efforts to Find Missing Persons, Including Through Coordination in the Missing Persons Process with the Ministry of Justice." May 23, 2024. Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/iraq/iraq-seeks-enhance-efforts-find-missing-persons-including-through-coordination-missing-persons-process-ministry-justice>.

⁵ Shafaq News, 2024. "Inside Iraq's Ongoing Search for Answers in ISIS Mass Graves." May 11, 2024. Available at: <https://shafaq.com/en/Report/Inside-Iraq-s-ongoing-search-for-answers-in-isis-mass-graves>.

⁶ Anadolu Agency, 2024. "Iraqi Turkmen Await Recovery of Relatives' Bodies from Daesh/ISIS Mass Grave in Mosul." July 20, 2024. Available at: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/iraqi-turkmen-await-recovery-of-relatives-bodies-from-daesh-isis-mass-grave-in-mosul/3280890>.

Consultation Findings:

“There are no efforts to search for missing and kidnapped people.”

— Yazidi Survivor

All affected families and communities deserve to learn the fate of their missing loved ones, experience the relief of reunion with those who return, and have the opportunity to grieve and honour those who are lost. In consultations, this emerged as a dominant demand for Yazidi survivors, both in Iraq and abroad.

Participants underlined the need to search for kidnapped individuals and exhume mass graves, and expressed concerns over the perceived lack of concerted effort by the GoI to adequately address these painful files, emphasising the need for renewed commitment and focused action. There is a strong consensus among the Yazidi community that prioritising this issue is essential.

C4JR Recommendations:

Prioritise action by the GoI, supported by the international community, to intensify efforts in resolving cases of the kidnapped and missing, by:

1. Developing a publicly available, community-centred plan for the exhumation of all remaining mass graves, and ensuring the families of missing persons are kept informed of any advancements.
2. Ensuring the identification and return of all remains – notably through broad campaigns of blood sample collection, including with families of the missing who are living abroad – in a dignified and culturally sensitive manner.
3. Strengthening efforts to search for the missing, particularly in Syria and Turkey, through enhanced multi-stakeholder coordination to ensure that survivors can return safely to their families and communities.

4 Support Survivors' Economic Independence

A decade after the genocide, many survivors in Iraq remain largely dependent on aid, living in precarious conditions without the means to sustain themselves economically or provide for their families. Economic conditions in conflict-affected communities are dire, characterised by high unemployment and scarce livelihood opportunities; a situation which exacerbates vulnerabilities and increases risks of exploitation. According to Governor Abdul Qader Al-Dakhil in June 2024, Nineveh's unemployment rate exceeds 35%.

In addition to financial support, there is a clear need for sustainable job opportunities, as well as the provision of vocational and skills training. The recent launch of the Empowerment Initiative by the General Directorate for Survivors' Affairs (GDSA) in coordination with the Ministry of Culture, which aims to train YSL beneficiaries in various professions, is a step in the right direction.⁷ However, more needs to be done.

Consultation Findings:

“Create suitable job opportunities for survivors.”

—Turkmen Survivor

“Provide financial support to survivors to enable them to open economic projects.”

—Christian Survivor

Consultations with all four communities highlighted the need to promote the economic independence of survivors, not only through the provision of financial support and compensation under existing reparative schemes, but also through job opportunities, vocational training, skills training, and support in opening businesses and starting projects. Participants stressed that job opportunities that match their skills and provide appropriate salaries should be made available to survivors in both the public and private sectors. There was also a clear focus on the need for livelihood projects, with some participants suggesting that financial scholarships, combined with training, could enable them to open such projects independently, and others requesting that more livelihood projects, for both male and female survivors, be implemented by NGOs.

⁷ See General Directorate for Survivors' Affairs. Facebook, May 9, 2024. Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/100076062182514/posts/463797189499017/?mibextid=rS40aB7S9Ucbxw6v>.

C4JR Recommendations:

Empower survivors, especially female survivors, to become economically independent by:

1. Implementing vocational training and job creation programmes tailored to the local economy, including agriculture, crafts, and small businesses.
2. Investing in projects that provide livelihood opportunities and educational pathways to sustainable career routes.
3. Increasing and expanding the proposed package of incentives for IDP returnees from the Ministry of Migration and Displacement (MoMD), which includes government jobs and interest-free business loans, and implementing YSL provisions designed to secure job opportunities for eligible survivors, including via priority in public employment at a rate of 2%.

5 Promote Justice and Accountability at the National and International Level

While the YSL includes a number of provisions related to ensuring justice and accountability for ISIL crimes – including on coordination and evidence sharing, initiation of criminal proceedings and extradition of criminals, protection of witnesses, and the denial of general or special amnesty for those who perpetrated crimes of kidnapping and captivity against Yazidis – challenges remain in fully implementing these measures and ensuring all survivors receive the justice they deserve.

At the international level, UNITAD has been actively involved in supporting accountability efforts, including by strengthening the technical capacity of relevant Iraqi authorities, documenting evidence of atrocities committed by ISIL, and supporting convictions of ISIL members for international crimes in third states. Yet, with only one month remaining before the closure of UNITAD, the GoI has not yet acted to codify international atrocity crimes (such as war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide) within Iraqi criminal law, nor created a survivor-centred criminal accountability mechanism with jurisdiction over such crimes.⁸ Additionally, the transfer of evidence from the UN to a national jurisdiction requires assurances of fair, independent trials and adherence to international standards, which Iraq has yet to provide – impeding UNITAD’s ability to share all files. In the interim, without sustainable arrangements in place for long-term preservation, such as via an enhanced archive within the UN, there is also a real risk that the evidence collected by UNITAD may become inaccessible to third states with the capacity to investigate and prosecute ISIL for core international crimes, jeopardising the only justice avenue currently available to survivors. Considerable work remains to ensure that justice – as both a moral obligation and a legal necessity – is achieved for all survivors.

Consultation Findings:

“Justice must be achieved and criminals in the ranks of ISIL must be held accountable.”

— Yazidi Survivor
Living in Germany

“Accelerate the arrest of perpetrators inside and outside Iraq and bring them to justice.”

— Shabak Survivor

⁸ Coalition for Just Reparations (C4JR), August 2022. “Position Paper on an ISIL Accountability Mechanism in Iraq”. Available at: https://c4jr.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Final-position-paper-ISIL-mechanism-ENG_FINAL_Hyperlinks-1.pdf.

In a majority of consultations, diverse survivor groups flagged the need for justice, citing concerns about the lack of progress toward accountability for ISIL perpetrators. Participants emphasised that perpetrators should be prosecuted within the Iraqi judicial system, but noted that the arrangements needed to facilitate this process – such as the establishment of a special court – have not moved forward. Participants also stated that coordination with judicial entities outside of Iraq should be reinforced, including with prosecution teams in Europe, to ensure that perpetrators are prosecuted everywhere. Some stressed that efforts to arrest and try perpetrators should be intensified, while others connected the realisation of justice to the prevention of similar atrocities in the future.

C4JR Recommendations:

Strengthen and coordinate national and international efforts to prosecute ISIL perpetrators for the crimes committed in Iraq, by:

1. Taking steps to ensure the appropriate preservation and management of evidence collected by UNITAD, including by: establishing an enhanced archive with dedicated staff in the UN to ensure that evidence continues to be processed, analysed, and made available to courts, prosecutors, and international mechanisms to support the prosecution of ISIL perpetrators; and creating a secure information management system within Iraq for the storage of confidential information and evidence in its possession.⁹
2. Ensuring the effective participation and protection of survivors and witnesses in criminal proceedings, while upholding fair trial guarantees and public hearings.
3. Pursuing, in consultation with survivors and CSOs, the adoption of a law to codify international atrocity crimes in Iraq's legal order.

⁹ Coalition for Just Reparations (C4JR), 2024. "Iraqi Civil Society and Survivor Networks Position on the Request of Iraq to Terminate UNITAD's Mandate in September 2024." March 12, 2024. Available at: https://c4jr.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/C4JR-report_ENG.pdf. Accessible via: <https://c4jr.org/1203202428508>.

6 Secure a Safe, Dignified, and Voluntary End to Displacement

Protracted displacement remains a pressing protection issue for survivors of ISIL, with approximately 160,000 Iraqis, including 132,000 Yazidis, living in under-resourced IDP camps in the KRI, where available services have diminished since the closure of the internationally-led humanitarian file in 2022.¹⁰ Many survivors live in informal settlements with inadequate living conditions, lacking basic services such as clean water, sanitation, and electricity.

The GoI's decision to close all remaining displacement camps by July 30, 2024 has raised significant concerns, however, particularly among Yazidi survivors. Many cannot return to Sinjar, where current conditions are far from conducive to a dignified life. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), around 80 percent of Sinjar's public infrastructure and 70 percent of civilian homes were destroyed between 2014 and 2017.¹¹ Access to essential services such as electricity and water remains limited, and critical infrastructure, including health and educational facilities, has yet to be rebuilt. Finding suitable accommodation remains challenging due to the widespread destruction of housing and the lack of adequate compensation to support the ability of returnee communities to rebuild and recover effectively. As of February 2024, while 8,300 claims seeking compensation for property damage under Law No. 20 of 2009 have reportedly been processed, no one from Sinjar has received the promised payment.¹² It is critical, in light of the above constraints and those raised elsewhere regarding security concerns and inadequate livelihood prospects in areas of origin, that survivors are not only afforded the right to voluntary, safe, and sustainable returns, but are also provided with viable alternatives, as needed.

Consultation Findings:

“Most survivors lack housing.” — Christian Survivor

“Provide a safe and secure environment for [...] survivors and provide a suitable place for them to live.” — Yazidi Survivor

¹⁰ UNHCR, 2024. “UNHCR Iraq Factsheet, January 2024”, UNHCR Data Portal, 7 March 2024. Available at: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/107096>; Duhok Directorate of Migration and Crisis Management data (July 2023).

¹¹ IOM, 2022. “More Support Needed for Survivors of the Sinjar Massacre.” August 4, 2022. Available at: <https://www.iom.int/news/more-support-needed-survivors-sinjar-massacre>.

¹² Human Rights Watch (HRW), 2024. “Iraq: Looming Camp Closures in Kurdistan.” May 13, 2024. Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/05/13/iraq-looming-camp-closures-kurdistan>.

Representatives of multiple survivor groups stressed the need for permanent housing solutions, as many currently live in IDP camps, informal settlements, or rented spaces after the destruction of their homes, displacement, and resulting demographic shifts. Survivors flagged the need for adequate compensation for the loss of property during the ISIL conflict, as well as comprehensive support to facilitate their ability to return to areas of origin, reintegrate within their communities, and rebuild their homes. Some participants also emphasised the need to improve access to resettlement in safe countries and facilitate the reunification of separated families, reflecting a conceptualisation of “home” that extends beyond geographic location.

C4JR Recommendations:

Commit to the improvement of living conditions required for survivors’ safe and voluntary return and identification of alternative solutions, by:

1. Realising durable solutions for IDPs by implementing relevant international standards of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), which place IDPs at the centre of the decision-making process on durable solutions for displacement. IDPs should be in a position to make an informed and voluntary decision on one of the three models: sustainable reintegration at the place of origin, local integration in areas where internally displaced persons take refuge, or integration in another part of the country.
2. Investing in the reconstruction of critical infrastructure and improved services in conflict-affected areas to facilitate the dignified return of displaced communities, if desired.
3. Continuing to provide resources to IDP camps and displaced communities, focusing on improving living conditions and ensuring access to essential services while awaiting durable solutions.
4. Compensating survivors for property loss through full implementation of applicable reparative schemes, including Law No. 20 of 2009 and the YSL; increasing MoMD proposed compensation grants for returnees from 4,000,000 Iraqi Dinars to an amount that effectively provides for relocation needs; and ensuring this incentive package is available for all IDPs.

7 Ensure All Eligible Survivor Groups Can Equitably Access Reparations

The YSL recognises survivors of ISIL from the Yazidi, Turkmen, Christian, and Shabak communities as eligible for reparations. However, the eligibility parameters stipulated within the law do not ensure equitable access across survivor groups, leaving some girls, boys, and men from the four components without viable access to reparations. Additionally, certain evidentiary standards and verification measures that are not included within the law but applied in practice, such as the requirement that survivors file criminal complaints and submit investigation documents for their applications to be considered, have reportedly posed disproportionate barriers for specific categories of eligible survivors – including, for example, those unable or unwilling to return to areas of origin due to protection risks; children and orphans, for whom the process may be difficult or impossible to navigate independently; and those with intersecting vulnerabilities, such as minority women who survived sexual violence, for whom the act of telling their stories may be complicated by the prospects of retraumatisation, community stigma, and discriminatory treatment within the criminal justice system. Remote arrangements for each step of the application process have yet to be established, leaving an estimated 1,200 survivors residing abroad unable to apply for their reparations without returning to Iraq, representing a significant barrier to access.

Consultation Findings:

- “Include minor children among survivors receiving psychological and material support.”* — Christian Survivor
- “Include all components and categories, while easing procedures when applying for inclusion in reparations.”* — Shabak Survivor
- “Facilitate routine procedures [...] when submitting an application.”* — Turkmen Survivor

In consultations, multiple survivor groups stressed that all women, men, and children from the four eligible communities who survived the crimes listed in the YSL should have equitable access to reparations. Some participants proposed amending the eligibility criteria within the law – such as by adding Christian, Turkmen, and Shabak children to Article 2.3 – to ensure the balanced inclusion of all four recognised survivor groups within the reparations programme. Some also

emphasised the need to ease application and verification procedures in relevant institutions, while others added that increasing the number of women in these institutions could mitigate existing barriers for female survivors. Although there is a lack of clear consensus within and across survivor communities on some of these points, a strong theme emerging from the consultations was the need to address barriers to access under the YSL.

C4JR Recommendations:

Ensure maximum inclusion of recognised survivor groups and preserve the right to remedy and reparation under the YSL without discrimination by:

1. Making reparative measures equally accessible to survivors from all recognised minority groups.
2. Facilitating inclusive and impartial application of the law, and mitigating barriers at every stage of the process – from application, verification, and appeal, to the distribution of benefits.
3. Establishing remote mechanisms and modalities for each phase of the application process to ensure that survivors abroad can receive their reparations.
4. Monitoring implementation of the YSL and engaging in regular consultation with diverse survivor groups to ensure stronger integration of inclusive, participatory, and survivor-centred approaches in the ongoing administration and management of the reparations programme.

8 Facilitate Access to Education

Many survivors have experienced significant educational disruptions as a result of the ISIL conflict, which triggered waves of mass displacement, separated children from their caregivers, destroyed infrastructure, and interrupted essential services. Particular challenges are faced by those who spent a prolonged period of time in captivity, missed critical years of formal schooling, and, in some instances, also lost the ability to absorb information in the language of instruction.

Educational opportunities for affected survivors are not equitably accessible to all. For some, the loss of civil documentation has complicated the process of reintegration within the formal school system. Access to informal and emergency education programmes in displacement settings has varied widely, as schools, teachers, and child friendly spaces are not always available in camps and informal settlements, and their operations and capacity – particularly over the last decade – have fluctuated in response to shifts in international aid.

Some survivors have aged out of Iraq’s educational system. While the YSL exempts eligible survivors from the age requirement, concrete mechanisms to facilitate their return to school and provide accelerated educational pathways are still being established. Although the desire for education is prevalent, many are hesitant to return for fear of being placed with much younger students, in programmes that are not adapted to survivor needs, and without adequate support to help them cope with trauma and stigma.

In early 2024, Iraq’s Council of Ministers voted to suspend funding for the education of displaced children in the KRI, effectively halting all federally funded education ahead of the deadline to close camps and resulting in the closure of educational facilities in displacement settings.

Consultation Findings:

“We are cut from education.” —Yazidi Survivor

Multiple survivor groups highlighted the need for tailored educational support, including the creation of special education programmes and vocational courses to help bridge the gaps in survivors’ formal education and support them in gaining the skills necessary to rebuild their lives and integrate into society. Survivors also emphasised the importance of providing psychological support within educational settings to address the trauma experienced by affected children and youth. Some participants suggested opening special schools for survivors to ensure that they are properly treated and adequately supported in their pursuit of education.

C4JR Recommendations:

Facilitate access to education for all survivors wishing to continue their studies, by:

1. Continuing to provide federal education funding for displaced children in the KRI until the end of their displacement, in line with survivors' preferences.
2. Building and repairing schools and universities in affected areas, ensuring they are equipped with all necessary facilities, resources, and materials.
3. Developing special and/or accelerated education programmes that are adapted to survivor needs, and hiring and training teachers to provide quality education and promote a positive learning environment for all students, including survivors.¹³
4. Establishing scholarship programmes to support higher education for survivors and provide them with opportunities for vocational training and skills development.

¹³ Bilagher, Moritz, and Kaushik, Amit. 2020. "The Potential of Accelerated Learning Programmes (ALPs) for Conflict-Ridden Countries and Regions: Lessons Learned from an Experience in Iraq," International Review of Education. February 2020. Available at: <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1246458>.

9 Pursue Recognition of the Genocide by the International Community

While several countries have formally recognised the genocide committed by ISIL, widespread international acknowledgement is still lacking. This recognition is vital to honour survivors, secure justice, and ensure global support for their needs. International recognition can also pave the way for more robust legal frameworks and accountability measures to prevent future atrocities. It serves as a powerful statement of solidarity and a commitment to upholding human rights and preventing genocide.

While the YSL recognises the crimes of genocide and crimes against humanity inflicted upon members of diverse ethno-religious minorities in Iraq – including Yazidis, Christians, Shabaks, and Turkmen – broader recognition within the international community is still needed, ten years after the ISIL onslaught.

Consultation Findings:

“Obtain [...] international recognition that what happened to minorities in 2014 was genocide.” —Christian Survivor

“Acknowledging genocide is not enough, we need action on the ground.” —Yazidi Survivor

Representatives of diverse survivor groups emphasised the need for the international community to recognise the genocide committed by ISIL against the Yazidi, Christians, Shabak, and Turkmen communities, which formed a key demand emerging from the consultations. In survivor discourse, this focus on securing international recognition was often – and perhaps necessarily – linked to a need for other concrete forms of international support, such as assistance in recovering kidnapped persons, coordination in efforts to achieve justice, raising awareness in countries with resettlement programmes to provide safe futures for those at risk, and continued support to preserve security and stability in Iraq.

C4JR Recommendations:

Support efforts to formally recognise the genocide, by:

1. Pursuing a UN General Assembly Resolution designating August 3 as the International Day of Reflection for All Victims and Survivors of the Genocide by ISIL, and encouraging all Member States, organisations of the United Nations, and relevant international organisations to observe the International Day, including special observances and activities in memory of the victims and survivors of the genocide.
2. Establishing an Outreach Programme on the 2014 Genocide in Iraq, focused on two main themes: 1) Preventing genocide: learning the lessons of the genocide to prevent similar acts in the future, and 2) Supporting survivors: raising awareness of the lasting impact of the genocide on survivors, particularly widows, orphans and survivors of sexual violence, and the challenges they still face.

10 Fully Implement the Yazidi Survivors' Law (YSL)

The YSL is widely recognised, both locally and internationally, as a groundbreaking piece of legislation and an important milestone in Iraq's post-conflict recovery. It promises a variety of material and symbolic reparations to survivors from several ethno-religious communities targeted by ISIL. After a year of mobilisation and preparation, the application process for those seeking reparations was launched in September 2022, and by March 1, 2023, the GDSA had distributed the first monthly salary payments to an initial cohort of successful applicants. As of June 2024, 1,834 survivors have been approved to receive the reparations promised under the law, and have begun receiving monthly salaries.¹⁴ The GDSA has recently expanded its work into the distribution of other benefits, including by allocating 250 plots of residential land in Sinjar and 12 in Tel Afar to survivors, through a lottery system, in May 2024.¹⁵

Although considerable progress has been made, some eligible survivors have yet to apply (including an estimated 1,200 residing abroad) and many reparations measures envisioned within this framework have yet to be implemented. Full implementation of the YSL is key to addressing many of the demands featured in this report, including for violence prevention (Art. 4.2 and 8.1), healthcare (Art. 5.6), determining the fate of the kidnapped and missing (Art. 5.7 and 5.8), economic independence (Art. 5.5, 6.1, and 6.4), justice and accountability (Art. 5.9, 7.3, and 9.2), permanent housing (Art. 6.2), education (Art. 5.4 and 6.3), and recognition of the genocide (Art. 7.1 and 7.2). This state-sponsored reparations programme envisioned with this law is a long-term, comprehensive, and ambitious project. Ensuring its success will require the sustained commitment of actors at every level, far into the future.

While a broader transitional justice process is required to guarantee non-repetition and address underlying discrimination against minorities, full implementation of the YSL is a critical first step in meeting the needs of survivors and contributing to their resilience and recovery.

¹⁴ See General Directorate for Survivors' Affairs. Facebook, 2024. Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100076062182514>.

¹⁵ See General Directorate for Survivors' Affairs. Facebook, October 17, 2023. Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/mvp7t3t4>.

Consultation Findings:

“Encouraging and approving the Yazidi Survivors’ Law was an extremely important matter for the survivors and the families of the victims, but this does not mean that everything has been achieved. There is more to be done for justice and compensation and implementation of all articles of [the] YSL.”

— Yazidi Survivor Living in Germany

Implementation of the YSL was universally mentioned in consultations with diverse survivor groups, reinforcing the critical importance of this framework. Participants celebrated the enactment of this law as a “turning point and qualitative leap” in Iraq, constituting a key change that has brought hope to survivors in the ten years since the genocide.

Given the potential of the YSL to address many of their remaining needs, survivors stressed the need for full and complete implementation of all provisions, including those related to financial support, job opportunities and priority in public employment, housing and plots of land, and the opening of rehabilitation centres, among others. Full implementation of the YSL was perceived to be essential in facilitating the recovery and reintegration of survivors.

C4JR Recommendations:

Advocate for the state-sponsored reparations programme established by the YSL to be fully implemented, with care taken to ensure that every stage of the process – from outreach, to application and appeal, to the distribution of benefits – is managed in a survivor-centred, transparent, and timely way, by:

1. Fulfilling promises to survivors by ensuring that the reparations programme is properly resourced and its implementing institutions are adequately supported to ensure full, long-term implementation of the YSL.
2. Keeping full, long-term implementation of the YSL on the national and international agenda as a framework for public accountability.
3. Investing in interim programming to foster robust collaboration between CSOs and government in the delivery of needed services and support until the state-sponsored reparations programme is fully implemented and operating at scale.



10 Demands, Years After the Genocide by ISIL

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 www.c4jr.org

 info@c4jr.org

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