



## Free Yezidi Foundation<sup>1</sup> Statement

6 June 2019

### *Daesh (ISIS) Burn Crop Fields in Shingal, Iraq*

In May and early June 2019, Daesh (Islamic State, IS, ISIS) terrorists allegedly burnt significant areas of cropland in Syria and Iraq<sup>2</sup>. On Tuesday, 4 June, thousands of donums of agricultural land in Shingal (Sinjar) were set ablaze<sup>3</sup>, an operation claimed by Daesh.

Continued attacks by Daesh militants are not surprising. Despite military defeat, thousands of Daesh members and fighters remain in Syria and Iraq<sup>4</sup>, possessing the will, training, and experience to carry out insurgent attacks.<sup>5</sup> The latest tactic of agricultural arson is detailed in recent Daesh propaganda newsletters<sup>6</sup>.

“The apostates and their helpers delighted in the disappearance of the portion of lands that were controlled by the Islamic State...And they forgot or pretended to forget that the day would come in which the Islamic State would take revenge for the Muslims and would give double the payback...And the harvest season continues to grow day after day at the expense of the lives and properties of the apostates in Iraq and al-Sham.”<sup>7</sup>

It must be emphasized that the existence and activity of Daesh members in Iraq and Syria continue to present both local and global security threats. Particular attention should be paid to the impact such attacks can have upon vulnerable religious minority groups seeking to return to their areas of origin, particularly in Nineveh province, Iraq<sup>8</sup>.

For governments, humanitarian organizations, and UN agencies seeking to improve and restore livelihoods of ethnic and religious minorities in their areas of origin, it must be emphasized that security is a necessary pre-requisite. Vulnerable populations mustn't be lured into dangerous circumstances with false or unsustainable promises. It is imperative that IDPs return to their homelands. But success requires a *safe*, dignified return on their own terms – not a rushed return at all costs. The June 2019 agricultural attack on Shingal could be a precursor of more to come

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<sup>1</sup> The Free Yezidi Foundation is an apolitical, non-profit civil society organization, led by Yezidi women, dedicated to providing humanitarian and human rights assistance to Yezidis in need.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.bellingcat.com/news/mena/2019/06/03/torching-and-extortion-osint-analysis-of-burning-agriculture-in-iraq/> ; <https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/counterterrorism/isis-claims-escalating-use-of-wildfire-arson-as-terror-tactic/> ; <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/isis-beaten-in-iraq-and-syria-but-remnants-crop-burning-hits-harvest-hard/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://twitter.com/slimshingaly/status/1136343684314804224> ; <https://twitter.com/MazAlJumaily/status/1136266855444865024>

<sup>4</sup> <http://undocs.org/S/2018/705> ; <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/dec/19/us-troops-syria-withdrawal-trump>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-45547595>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.memri.org/jttm/isis-weekly-magazine-article-praises-and-encourages-%E2%80%8Earson-attacks-syria-and-iraq>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.aymennjawad.org/2019/06/burning-of-farms-in-iraq-and-syria-by-the-islamic>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.freeyezidi.org/blog/free-yezidi-foundation-report-withdrawal-of-us-troops-from-syria/>

against Yezidis and other minorities. Security vacuums in Hamrin mountains<sup>9</sup>, Makhmour<sup>10</sup>, and other areas may serve as potential bases for Daesh operations. This is not a passing threat.

We call upon government aid agencies, UN agencies, and local and international NGOs to be creative and flexible in conceiving programs and initiatives to provide aid and, importantly, training to the vulnerable and oppressed, especially ethnic and religious minorities. Skill training and capacity building may eventually prove as important, or more important, than the physical return of populations to their areas of origin.

Minority populations, often excluded from growth and economic opportunity, have long depended on agriculture as the primary or only source of livelihood. This applies to Yezidis and also to others in Nineveh. To provide better opportunities for this and future generations, Yezidis must diversify and modernize. Subsistence survival on traditional agriculture leaves Yezidis at the mercy of the land and struggling to survive, also vulnerable to arson and sabotage from neighbors. It is better for Yezidis to seek aid in the form of education, training, technological innovation, and new possibilities for livelihood that will allow our people to participate in the modern economy.

Finally, all relevant government security authorities must do their utmost to protect the land retaken from Daesh through difficult fighting and struggle, to make sure that the Daesh cancer does not slowly grow back in Iraq or Syria.



*Sinjar crop fields burning (photo Ezidi24)*

For more information or media inquiries, write to [info@freeyezidi.org](mailto:info@freeyezidi.org)

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<sup>9</sup> <https://ctc.usma.edu/caliphate-caves-islamic-states-asymmetric-war-northern-iraq/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.bellingcat.com/news/mena/2019/06/03/torching-and-extortion-osint-analysis-of-burning-agriculture-in-iraq/> ; <https://twitter.com/LizSly/status/1128357220473765890>