

# STUDY ON THE FEARS OF RETURNING TO SINJAR AFTER ISIL

Study Conducted by Peace and Freedom Organization

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## ABOUT THE PEACE AND FREEDOM ORGANIZATION

The Peace and Freedom Organization (PFO) is a non-governmental | anon-profit organization in Iraq and the Kurdistan Region working on the protection of rights and freedoms to ensure peaceful coexistence through strengthening trust and support between the different components of society and as well as the support and sustaining to guarantee rights, freedom, and social justice according to international standards.

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## **Introduction**

Before the 3rd of August 2014, the Sinjar District consisted of different religions and nationalities. The Yazidis were the largest religion but other religious groups such as Islam, Christianity, and Shabak were also living in Sinjar. These Iraqi communities lived well compared to other rural areas in Iraq. After the American war in 2003, the Sinjar District was facing its best time in history thanks to scientific progress, better well-being in life, and urbanization progress. The population of Sinjar also enjoyed a period of progress and lived in an excellent manner thanks to an increase of vehicles and the building houses from cement instead of mud. The scientific situation also improved as more people were interested in education and were sending their children to school. There were still problems such as lack of education, work, and social situations between religious communities. However, the problems were minor and the people of Sinjar lived in a spirit of love and peace. There was a true spirit between the Yazidi community and the Muslims which was an example of love and peace in Iraq. This was the basis of coexistence and brotherhood that might have been absent in the majority of Iraqi regions, especially the rural areas.

However, after the night of the 3rd of August 2014, the majority of the population fled to Kurdistan after the attacks against the Sinjar Districts and its control by ISIL. The Yazidis became the biggest victims, as thousands of women and daughters became victims of sexual violence and the men became kidnapped and eventually martyred. The people of the region became partners to the most heinous crimes of murder, looting, and captivity against the Yazidis. At this time, everyone is wondering how the living conditions in Sinjar between the Yazidis and those who collaborated with Da'esh who had caused the crime. The community is afraid of post-sectarian conflict among the citizens of the city. Therefore, we consider it necessary to prepare this report on the fears of return of the displaced communities in order to identify the fears and provide suggestions and solutions.

## **Research Questions**

1. How dangerous is the return of the displaced in terms of sectarian conflict?
2. What are the causes of danger due to the return of the displaced after ISIL?

## Research Goal

This research aims to show the seriousness of the situation of the problems and sectarian conflicts between the components of Sinjar. Moreover, it intends to seek solutions and proposals to reduce the problems and conflicts, as well as to take these possibilities into account by looking for future plans to prevent occurrences of sectarian conflicts. It is important to direct the political views and actions of the government to prevent the occurrences of potential sectarian conflict. The aftermath of extremism and the problems between religious, political, and national communities may lead to a crisis more tragic than the return of the people to Sinjar.

## Methods of Data Collection

Direct interview.

Focus Groups (Fox Crop)

The research sample

The Sample of this study includes 51 displaced individuals from Sinjar who were located in the Dohuk Province. The participating religions include Yazidis and Islam. Both sexes (male and female) were included.

Demographic Category	Total Count	Percentage
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	34	64%
Female	18	36%
<b>Religion</b>		
Yazidi	34	66%
Muslim	17	34%
<b>Age</b>		
2024- years	26	51%
2529- years	17	33%
30- 35 years	8	16%
<b>Education</b>		
Bachelor's Degree	15	29%
Diploma	15	29%
Preparatory	21	42%

## **Percentage of the sample by sex, religion, age and educational level.**

### **Research Questions**

Below is a sample through which questions were presented to participate in the study.

“Concerns about returning to Sinjar post-...” This research is independent from politics and governmental bodies. It is only aimed at identifying the concerns of the returnees as well as giving suggestions and recommendations on this phenomenon.

Please inform us about your opinion and answer the questions below. We promise to not reveal your name or any information for your safety and to avoid harassment. Thank you very much for your cooperation.

### **Participant Information**

Age: Gender: Male Female Religion: Yazidi Muslim

Education Level: Bachelor's Degree or higher

### **Questions**

- 1- What are the causes of sectarian conflicts?
- 2- What are the problems that are expected to return after the returning of displaced people?
- 3- Are there problems that occurred between the people of Sinjar before returning (during the displacement? And how?
- 4- What are the obstacles that may prevent the Yazidis from returning to Sinjar?
- 5- What measure should the government take after the return of the people to Sinjar?
- 6- How effective is the survival of Yazidi women in the hands of an organization that advocates the issue of return and stability?
- 7- What is the possibility of return of the people after the liberation of Sinjar?
- 8- What are the risks of return in terms of sectarian conflicts between the Yazidis and Muslims?
- 9- What are the most important proposals in light of which the Yazidis can return to Sinjar after ...

### **Analyses of Answers**

This study is based on (9) questions relating to the concerns of the returnees to Sinjar after collecting all the opinions of the participants and analysing the results obtained from them. The results obtained from the study questions, which were answered by the research sample , can be summarised as follows:

- 1- What are the causes of sectarian conflicts?
  - \* Conflicts among multiple parties themselves after the liberation of Sinjar.
  - \* The weak role of the government and the judiciary, as well as inability to protect its people.
  - \* Marginalization of the role of components at the expense of other components.
  - \* The dominance of religious and political groups over civil and governmental institutions.
  - \* Failure to hold accountable the defaulters and collaborators with legal bodies, which is due to

### **the absence of the rule of law and judiciary.**

- \* The possible assassination of sects and religions in the region.
  - \* Marginalization of the role of educators as well as educational and cultural institutions.
  - \* The weak role of the administrative and military authorities in the region.
- 2- What are the problems that are expected to occur after the return of the displaced?
- \* Racial problems between Sunni Arabs and Yazidis on one hand and Sunni Arabs and Shiites on the other.
  - \* Fears of indiscriminate assassination.
  - \* Political conflicts in the region.
  - \* Economic problems because of the high unemployment in the region.
  - \* Conflicts between the central and regional government over power.
- 3- Are there problems that occurred between the people of Sinjar before returning (during the displacement)? And what?

The Data below illustrates whether there were problems between the people of Sinjar during their displacement. Reasons for yes include (1) Religious extremism and discourse, (2) not accepting the others, (3) and the influence of political parties.

### **Number of Participants**

37: yes
14: no

- 4- What are the obstacles that may prevent the Yazidis from returning to Sinjar?
- \* Lack of security, safety, and protection of citizens.
  - \* Destruction of infrastructure and lack of services.
  - \* Not holding collaborators accountable to the people of the region.
  - \* Not releasing the abducted and kidnapped Yazidis from the grip of a terrorist organization.
  - \* Traces of mines and explosives left behind in the area.
  - \* Non-compensation to survivors which affects the return of the residents.
  - \* National and religious conflicts among the people of the region.
  - \* Insecurity between the Iraqi and Syrian border (Sinjar lies on the border of Iraq and Syria).
  - \* Lack of services projects benefitting the economic situation.
- 5- What measures should the government take after the return of the people to Sinjar?
- \* The application of the law and the accounting of defaulters and collaborators through the judiciary.
  - \* Compensation for the victims of genocide.



The establishment of health centres and providing basic services in Sinjar.

Ensure the right to education and raising its level in the region.

Focus on civil and governmental power and the non-influence of religious and tribal authority.

Establishment of legal committees for affected areas.

Providing job opportunities and increase employment opportunities in Sinjar.

The establishment of a legitimate military force of the people of the region to protect Sinjar.

Opening cultural and social centres to rehabilitate the community psychologically.

6- How effective is the survival of the Yazidi women in the hands of an organization that advocates the issue of return and stability.

Their survival has had a radical impact on the cohesion of families and their return to their areas.

Negative impact on the future of peaceful coexistence between the people of the region and their neighbours.

Leaving psychological effects to the people.

Their lack of return means that there is a sense of revenge within society.

7- What is the possibility of the return of the people after the liberation of Sinjar?

The Data below illustrates possibility for return following the liberation from the Sinjar district.

Number of Participants	Probability of Return
5	20%
15	30%
6	40%
8	50%
11	60%
5	70%
1	80%

8- What is the risk of return in terms of sectarian conflicts between the Yazidis and Muslims?

The Data below illustrates the risk of return possibly leading to sectarian conflicts between Yazidis and Muslims.

Number of Participants	Risk Ratio
1	10%
6	30%
2	40%
3	50%
1	60%
3	70%
7	80%
28	90%

- 9- What are the most important proposals in light of which the Yazidis can return to Sinjar?
- Provide international protection for the region.
  - Compensating the citizens (financially and morally).
  - Consider what happened to the Yazidis genocide.
  - The release of abductees from jails and compensating those affected.
  - Accounting losers in the fall of Sinjar and the collaborators with a hasty.
  - Providing job opportunities, job grades, opening appointments and special grades for the Yazidis in various fields.
  - Consideration of regional self-management as well as regional and international support.
  - Isolation of the areas of the neighbouring Arabs and linking the area of Tel Azir and its affiliated villages in the Sinjar district.
  - The development of health services in Sinjar and the establishment of health centres and hospital.
  - The construction of universities (postgraduate).
  - Consider victims of as martyrs and recognizing their rights.
  - Clearing the area if explosives.
  - Allowing the Yazidis to form their own entity.

## Conclusions

Through the analyses of data and research questions, the following conclusion can be extracted from the study:

The occurrence of sectarian conflicts is due to: 1) non-accountability of collaborators, 2) multiparty conflict, 3) weak administrative and government authority in the region, 4) and the dominance of religions and political influence.

Obstacles of return: 1) insecurity, 2) lack of compensation for those affected, 3) absence of reconstruction of infrastructure, 4) mines and explosives left behind in the region.

Nabessa return: The sample of the research shows that 60 % of the people of Sinjar returned after the liberation of the region.

Risk ratio: according to the opinion of the research sample and their point of view, the risk of return is very large (80 percent).

## Recommendations

The application of the law to hold accountable the collaborators who are responsible.

The establishment of legal committees for the affected people and areas.

To work on compensation for the victims of the Yazidi genocide and provide international protection to the region.

Work to free abductees.



Recognize the occurrence of genocide and the rights of the victims.

Clearing the area of explosives and establishing a legitimate military force from the people of the area to protect Sinjar.

Isolating the areas of the Yazidis from neighbouring Arabs and allowing the Yazidis to form their own entity.

Provide employment opportunities and job grades.

Open the appointment and ensure the right to education and raise the level in the region.

The provision of basic services and the development of the health service, including the establishment of health centres and hospitals.

The opening of cultural and social centres to rehabilitate the community psychologically.

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