

**Recommendations on the Resettlement of Christian Survivors
Captured by ISIS**

And

**Recommendations for the assistance of Internal Displaced
People (IDP) in post ISIS/Iraq**

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Summary:

The resettlement to Canada of Christian women and families survivors of sexual enslavement by ISIS, and the freed resettlement of IDP Christians who fled persecution because of their religion are urgent issues. Most of the IDP are unable to return to their homes. Resettling Christian refugees in Canada will help heal the deep wounds of the most vulnerable and traumatized survivors of ISIS barbarism so that they can rebuild their shattered lives again. The Christian community who has returned to their homes after liberation from ISIS, also need support and assistance to start a new life after three years devastation under ISIS.

Background to my involvement with refugees:

I have been working with the Refugees as a volunteer since 2008. I am a co-chair of the Refugee Committee at St. Luke's Parish in Thornhill/Markham and have been involved with the resettlement of the refugees and their needs. In 2016, I went to Lebanon with the ORAT (Office for Refugee Archdiocese of Toronto) to meet with the refugee families from Iraq and Syria and listen to their stories. All those traumatized families whom I met had all fled with only their cloths on leaving behind their home churches livelihood behind to be plundered and looted by the hordes of ISIS. Seeking refugee wherever their exhausted bodies fell in the cities of beleaguered Kurdistan. Those who were able to keep moving seek refuge in Lebanon and neighboring countries.

Since 2014, I've been urgently campaigning to raise funds and necessary supplies for Christian survivors in North of Iraq (Kurdistan region).

For this reason I decided to go to Arbil and visit the villages which had been occupied by ISIS like Karakosh, Bartela, Bashiqa, Bahizani, Duhook, Alkosh, Babiloo and others and to meet with the families who were living in the camps. During my visit I witnessed at first hand the depth of their tragedy which was especially inflicted upon the vulnerable women, gang raped and sold into slavery many times over, and families have been targeted, abused, robbed, displaced, murdered, and massacred by ISIS. There are many stories confirm the evidence that ISIS committed genocide against Christians in the region.

The History of Christianity in Iraq:

Christians have inhabited Iraq for about 2,000 years. The Christian people adopted Christianity in the first century in northern Iraq which became the center of Eastern Rite Church, and the dominating language was Aramaic.

The Christian people have been victimized by genocidal assault over the past century. Jihad (or holy war) was declared on 1914 in all of the Ottoman Empire. The main plot was to get rid of Christian minorities because their motto was (One Nation, One Religion). Approximately 750,000 Christian died during that genocide. In the seventies and eighties, Christian groups represented 10% of the Iraqi population around 1.5 million, In 2003, after the fallen of Saddam Hussain Regime the emerging of Islamic radical groups led to a mass exodus of Christians leaving dwindling number less than 500,00.

In 2014 ISIS has continued this genocide and persecution for Christians and other minorities and has contributed to the displacement of more than 200,000 Iraqi Christians.

Genocide against Christians in Iraq:

The ISIS forces have committed horrific crime of genocide against Christians and religious minorities in Northern Iraq. The U.S commission on International Religious Freedom, British government and the European Parliament declared that ISIS actions committed genocide. German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, former US secretary of state John Kerry, the Office of United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and Pop Francis have done like wise.. None of these declaration of genocide excluded Christians, who with other minorities in the region, have endured targeted attack at the hands of ISIS because of their religious beliefs.

Genocide is a crime defined by a Federal Statute and International Law. Elements of the genocide are the following:

- Kills member of the group.
- Causes serious bodily injury to members of the group.
- Causes mental harm to member of the group through drugs, torture or similar techniques.
- Subjects the group to conditions of life that are intended to cause the physical destruction of the group in whole or in part.
- Impose measures intended applications to prevent births with in the groups.
- Transfers by force children of the group to another group.

Iraqi Christians were subjected to all of the above. In the captivity of ISIS, husbands and wives completely isolated from each other. They also separated men and boys older than 12 years old from the rest of their families and executed those who refused to convert to Islam. Women and girls have been sold in slave markets or (souk sabaya) in Raqqa. They enjoyed killing Christians (infidels).

Shlomo Organization for Documentation has followed up, monitored and documented the crimes committed against Christians by the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria since 2003, in particular after occupying their territories on 9/6/2014. (the report will be attached with the briefing as PDF).

The evidence and documentations in the report authenticates that ISIS persecution of Iraqi Christians has become genocide- ethnic cleansing.

The future of persecuted Christians in Iraq:

No person, group, should live in fear of being killed, tortured, or oppressed because of their religious beliefs.

Even though ISIL is being driven out of the region, many Christians will not return until they are given guarantees from the Iraqi government, Kurdish Regional Government and the International Community that they will be able to live without fear that another ISIL uprising will put their life in dangerous. The region itself is in turmoil.

The Displaced Christians in post Of ISIS:

In Kurdistan, the internally displaced people have been struggling under very difficult economic conditions. Many Christians returning to their towns found their homes reduced to rebel, churches, schools, hospitals, and the infra structure itself destroyed.

The absence of security and stability very few of them would venture to re-inhabit and rebuild. Without intentional assistance and support, IDSP will not be able to reconstruct and live a normal life.

To give the Iraqi Christians a glimmer of hope, All governments especially Canada has always been a symbol of hope to those whose life has been shattered.

UNHCR Failing Christian Survivor Asylum Seeker to Canada:

UNHCR failed in its role to protect and assist Christians and Yazidis refugees, especially genocide survivors who survived heinous crime against humanity. The evidence to that, no Christian genocide victims have been referred to Canada. To receive assistance from UNHCR, genocide survivors and others, have to get to UNHCR camps and wait for a follow up appointment. It's difficult for them to stay and live in a camp because they fear discrimination and acts from under cover Islamic extremist still active within the camp.

It is believed that the Government Assisted Refugees program (GAR) has failed to address the genocide that is taking place in the Middle East among Christians and other ethnic and religious minorities. Although data is not available from the Ministry of Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), it is believed that the US experience, that as summarized in 2016 Washington Post article, is mirrored by the (GAR) program. The Washington Post article, which looked at the Syrian refugees that immigrated to the US at that year (-10.000), found that only ½ of 1% of these refugees were Christians. This is sharply at odds with the demographics in Syria, where Christians represent 10% of the population. The writer indicated that it was likely due to the fact that the refugees who are Christians or belong to another ethnic/religious minority bypass the UNHCR camps because they fear the Muslim extremist that live within those camps. However by passing the UN camps, these refugees are also bypassed for refugee recognition and aid by the UNHCR. It is from these camps that refugees are selected from. If Canada government is not actively assist genocide survivors and persecuted minorities, It's credibility in this endeavor will be in jeopardy.

During my visit to Arbil in March 2017, I met Christian survivors who were in-captivity of ISIS for almost three years. At that time very few have heard about numerous Christians in the hand of ISIS. Upon my returned to Canada I wanted to extend my help those victims. With the help of ORAT (Office of Refugees Archdiocese of Toronto), eight files of five families survivors were submitted to the UNHCR in Arbil. After more than a month, three families were contacted by UNHCR informed them that they would call them in twenty days for an interview that never came.

Recommendations for Resettlement:

Prioritize Resettlement of vulnerable women with Their Families:

Women, children and families who were enslaved by ISIS represent the most vulnerable people in need of Canada's support. Their tragedies, as a result of their endured captivity in the hands of ISIS. Many Christian women were bought and sold many times over. As a result, women are suffering from a deep emotional crisis require a long term care, also many suicide cases have occurred.

Children were kidnaped by the terrorist for example 3 years old Christina was wrenched from her mother arms.

Resettlement in Canada will help heal the deep wounds of the traumatized Iraqi Christians who were the victims of ISIS and rebuild their shattered life. The House of Commons immigration committee should invite a Christian victim survivor of ISIS and hosts meeting with her to share a story of her horrific captivity and the effects on all Christians and other religious minorities suffering from brutal persecution at the hand of ISIS. Christians are genocide and should get priority in refugee order.

Resettlement of IDP:

When Islamic Militant captured the city of Mosul and the Nineveh Plains, hundred of thousands of Christian fled into Iraqi Kurdistan abandoning their homes and belongings. They were depending on humanitarian aid from churches and non-governmental organizations. Many displaced Christians have already left the region, seeking asylum or resettlement elsewhere. When the ISIS is defeated and driven out from the area, some of the IDP have chosen to return to their homelands, the land of their ancestors and start again a new life full of struggling and difficulties. The others fear to return and chose to stay in Kurdish Region for many reasons:

- The region is still unsecured.
- The bond of trust between the Christians and their former Muslims neighbors have been severed, after those very neighbors turned them over to Islamic State forces back in 2014.
- Most of them have lack of money to rebuild their homes and restart their businesses.
- Many of them are seeking asylum and to be reunited with their migrant families who are living diaspora.

The government of Canada needs to do more to help and protect the people in Nineveh Plains by encouraging and supporting the privately sponsorship program (PSR). The program where Canadians raise private funds to sponsor refugees to come to Canada, and practice their rights to embrace those who they know will integrate into the Canadian family. This will help ease the backlog of Christian asylum seekers aspiring to safety resettle to Canada. Lifting the cap on private sponsorship and increase the quota so that ORAT and other private organizations can sponsor more refugees.

And also encourage the government to overhaul the UN to reform its refugee selection process to better support to who are internally displaced people such as the Christians and Yazidis survivors and insure that there isn't discrimination against these groups who seek refuge and asylum in Canada.

Furthermore, that the government should grant refugee status to those vulnerable people living in Kurdistan region in order to facilitate the resettlement in Canada.

The Canadian government should urgent the need to resettle survival of ISIS and their families.