

Dossier

About the situation of the Ezidi people in Şengal (Iraq)

- **genocide of the 03. August 2014**
- **current situation**
- **future perspectives**



NAV-YÊK – Navenda Yekîtiya Komelên Êzîdiya
Zentralverband der Ezidischen Vereine e.V.
Central Union of Ezidi Associations
Ulenburger Buchenallee 16, 32584 Löhne
E-Mail: navyek.eziden@gmail.com
Telefon: 0049 (0) 173-2398420

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

With the attached dossier, we want to discuss the developments, since the genocide that has been committed by the so called Islamic State (IS) against our Ezidi community of faith in Şengal (Shingal) and attempt to shed light on the current situation with the ongoing consequences of the traumatic massacre and to point out possible ways of creating solutions.

The religious community of the Ezidi is one of the oldest still existing religious communities in the world. The majority of this community lived in Şengal until the 3. August 2014, which is recognized both historically and also presently as the main settlement area.

In the faith of Ezidi, nature (Xweza: "that, which creates itself") holds a special and sacred value within itself. Important elements of nature are sun/fire, water, air/wind and earth. Rebirth is also considered as a part of nature. Nature is seen as the creator and goddess, which is the mother of all living beings. For this reason, nature also demands the mutual respect of all living creatures.

Over thousands of years, up until the present day, Ezidi people are constantly confronted with persecution, oppression, forced conversion (especially forced Islamization), slander and countless massacres & genocides.

Even after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the creation of the new states as Iraq, Syria and Turkey - in the course of the territorial shifts after World War I - the voice of the Ezidis was not heard and the repression continued.

The status of Ezidi people as a religious community has still not been recognized to the extent that it is entitled to under international law. Iraq didn't recognize a status for Ezidi people, nor did Turkey or Syria, which is not only detrimental to them, but in many cases has had bitter consequences for our society.

The people still didn't manage to build up the region of Şengal. On the contrary, these efforts are undermined and further threatened by the aggression of Erdogan and his armed forces. With the constant air attacks of this autocrat, a peaceful coexistence according to international law cannot be brought to practice.

We appeal to your sens of reason, your conscience and your humanity, to do everything in your power to ensure that peaceful coexistence, brotherhood and charity can have a place in the region.

We would be very pleased if you would give us positive feedback on this.

With kindest regards

Association Board of NAV-YÊK

The genocide of August the 03. August 2014 against the Ezidi people

On the 03. August 2014 the world public witnessed a genocidal attack by the so-called Islamic State (IS). The target of the attacks were the Ezidi people, one of the oldest religious communities in the Middle East.

During the attack on the Şengal (Shingal) region, which is considered the main settlement area of the Ezidi society, over 5000 defenseless people (women and children) have been murdered and the same number have been kidnapped. This crime against humanity made headlines in the entire media worldwide and thus became the focus of attention.

The Ezidi community has been shaken to its foundations by this genocide, as it has never been before. Murder, rape, decapitation, deportation of women and children, forced Islamization, forced marriage, slavery, as well as a mass flight of hundreds of thousands of people from their homeland, was basically nothing more than an update of what the Ezidian people have experienced a lot of times, but unfortunately too often this history of the Ezidi has been written down.

Out of this genocide, in the 21st century, that happened with such brutality in front of the eyes of the world community, unfortunately no consequences have occurred, as if nothing had happened. The Ezidi people in Şengal are still defenseless and without a legally secured status.

The genocide, which by the Ezidi society is called the "73rd Ferman" (kurd. for genocide), goes down in the tragic and painful history of this society. The extent has not yet been fully investigated, as large parts of Şengal and the surrounding villages have been destroyed and are still full of mines. Thousands of girls, children and women are still in the clutches of the so-called IS and their allies.

One of the main reasons why this genocide on this scale could have occurred is, that the military forces of the KDP withdrew from the region without any resistance on the day of the attack, leaving the Ezidi population at the mercy of the IS's "battlefield". Until the day of the genocide, the so called "Kurdish Democratic Party" has been the dominant force and had a massive military presence. As a result, all Ezidi people believed that they were protected by this stationed force, against any kind of possible attacks from the IS.

On the other hand, a handful of fighters from the YPG/YPJ and HPG/YJA-Star units came to rescue the people. They succeeded in clearing a humanitarian escape corridor to northern Syria, saving the lives of hundreds of thousands of Ezidi civilians.

Shortly after the attack on Şengal, the Ezidi people formed their own defense units (YBŞ-YJŞ) in the mountains, which were made up out of the Ezidi society in the region. These have since been integrated into Iraq's state security system and recognized by it.

The current situation of the Ezidi people in Şengal

Şengal consists of more than 16 settlement areas, which are located around and also in the Şengal mountains. Before the massacre on 03 August 2014, more than 500,000 people lived in these settlements. Currently, there are only about 120 000 people still live there. More than 200 000 Ezidi people are living in Duhok and Zacho, which are under control of the Iraqi-Kurdish government, and about 10 000 in the north of Syria (Rojava). The remaining population has fled to Turkey, Europe and America.

Despite the catastrophic conditions, lack of humanitarian aid, poor water and sanitation, food shortages, lack of electricity, lack of medical care and lack of infrastructure, there is a strong will of the population to return and organize a new life in their ancestral homeland Şengal.

However, mere will and unorganized efforts are not enough to ensure the Ezidi peoples existence in the region in a sustainable manner - they need support from the outside.

The precarious situation of the Ezidi people and other non-muslim minorities becomes more problematic as IS supporters resettle in the surrounding of the Şengal region. The situation is further aggravated by the increasing number of attacks on the Ezidi people in Şengal, which are contrary to international law. The fear of the Ezidi society is, that the IS will resurge in the region, and this fear is more than justified. This leads to further tensions between the Ezidi society and the radical Islamic Arabs in this region.

Under Erdogan's pressure, the Iraqi government closed the border between Şengal and northern Syria (Rojava) at the end of August 2018, with considerable economic consequences. The Ezidi people in Şengal are thus literally encircled. The Ezidi people living in Şengal receive no support, neither from national, nor international institutions. The aid organizations have also remained extremely passive. From the ranks of the Ezidi society, who are already abroad, occasional fundraising campaigns have been and continue to be carried out, but with the best will in the world this is not enough to satisfy the basic needs of the population.

Several times air raids have been carried out by the Turkish state in violation of international law. The attacks have the sole function of destroying the structures that have been built up, in order to stop the return process of the people to Şengal and to support the Sunni Arabs and Turkmen, known as followers of the IS, in their efforts in the region. The recurrent argument, that the PKK is stationed there in the region, is an advanced pretext and serves to legitimize the attacks. The PKK has demonstrably withdrawn its troops after the complete liberation of Şengal from the IS.

The democratic system, already proven in northern Syria, undoubtedly serves as a model for the Ezidi people in Şengal, and is in no way a justification of the attacks.

The inaction and lack of reaction of international institutions such as the United Nations, European Union, Council of Europe, as well as the influential states (USA, Russia, France, England, Germany, etc.) towards the Turkish state further encourages him in his aggressive expansion politics.

The Turkish government obviously has imperial goals throughout the region and is pursuing a corresponding strategy of intimidation, deportation and ethnic-religious cleansing against the non-muslim minorities. Those who do not distance themselves from the Erdogan's imperialist politics are in collaboration with them and are ultimately partly responsible for their consequences.

Perspectives and Solutions

The process of uprooting to which the Ezidi religious community is exposed continues at an alarming rate. Unfortunately, a complete demise of this ancient religion can no longer be ruled out - this would mean an irretrievable loss for the whole of mankind. The future of this religious community depends crucially on the extent, to which the Ezidi people are allowed to rebuild a free, secure and dignified life in their main settlement area of Şengal. The success of such a construction depends crucially also on the extent to which the Ezidi society can organize itself as a unit in the spirit of the time.

External factors in the form of lacking support and an attitude of indifference can slow down this necessary process of renewal, even stop it altogether. In this respect, it is crucial that Ezidi people receive full support in their legitimate demands and aspirations.

Some of these demands are long term, some are only short or medium term. All goals have to be realistic and according to this linked and coordinated if they shall lead to a success. A certain contribution to this has to come from Ezidi people themselves, but some would have to be flanked by outside support. A few aspects or alternative solutions that could be essential for the continued existence of the Ezidi faith community are the following ones:

- Anchoring a **constitutional status** in the form of two independent provinces within the framework of the Iraqi constitution and the existing territorial integrity of the state, in Şengal (Ezidi people, partly shiites and open minded sunni Arabs) and in the Nineveh region (Ezidi, Christian, Shebeken)
- Reconstruction of the Şengal (Sinjar) region together with other regions of the oppressed and disadvantaged minorities in Iraq. To this end, an "**International Donor Conference for the Reconstruction of Şengal**" must be established.
- Recognition, expansion and deepening of the already existing social and security structures, which have been built up by the local population with great effort.
- Creation of an autonomous, specific protection and security mechanism, which in turn should be fully integrated into the security and defense architecture of the state.
- Immediate establishment of a no-fly zone over the Şengal region to secure and preserve the lives of civilians as well as residential areas, civil infrastructure and important monuments.
- Consistent and effective sanctions targeted against war aggressors and their responsible persons, depending if they do not stop their attacks on the Ezidi people in Şengal.
- Recognition of IS barbarism as genocide as of 03. August 2014. International investigation of those responsible as well as their leader to initiate criminal proceedings at the International Court of Justice in Den Haag.
- Immediate opening of the borders between North-Syria (Rojava) and Şengal.
- Initiation of a well-coordinated and professionally organized peaceful process of reconciliation within the Ezidi people as well as between the Ezidi people and their sunni and shiite neighbors, in order to enable peaceful and cosmopolitan coexistence.
- Education and support of democratically organized and legitimized institutions.
- Strengthening of civil society through subsidiary promotion of independent, autonomous self-organizations (voluntary work, associations, women, youth, village communities, religious communities, etc.).

- Central Association of Yezidi Associations e.V.- NAV-YÊK
- Umbrella organization of the Yezidi Women's Council e.V. - SMJE
- Exile Council Sinjar e.V. -MŞD
- Association of the Yezidi Youth e.V.- HCE
- Alliance of Yezidi from Syria e.V. -YES
- Alliance of the Êzîd Youth -HCE
- Coordination of the Yezidi village communities from Turkey- KMGE