

# Yazidi Resettlement in Canada

## -a review of their first year

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# Who are Yazidi?

- **Iraq, Syria**, Iran, Georgia and Armenia
- **Do not consider themselves Kurdish**
- Have faced 72 genocides since 1400
- Countries of resettlement: Germany, Russia, Armenia, Georgia, US, Sweden, Canada
- Almost all from Sinjar, Kirkuk and Erbil
- Significant misinformation and myths repeated in research and media
  - They are religiously and culturally distinct
  - Their “faith is a mix of ancient religions.”



# Methodology

- Face-to-face interviews conducted in **Kurmanji** by native Kurmanji speaker
- One **female (29 interviews)** one male (6 interviews)-both employed by settlement agencies (Lethbridge Family and Immigrant Services, Calgary Catholic Immigrant Society)
- Participants invited by local settlement agency
- Interviews supervised by local settlement agency
- Majority of Yazidis (pre-2018 and post-2018) live in four Canadian cities:
  - London: 9
  - Toronto: 10
  - Calgary: 6
  - Winnipeg: 10

# Yazidi & Other Recent Refugees: Demographic Comparison

	YAZIDI	Refugees from Other Places
Sex	66% female	48% female
Age	45% age 20-29yrs	59% < 18 years
No formal schooling	50%	38%
GAR	100%	43%
Knowledge of English	0%	11%
Last country of residence	Iraq (Turkey, Lebanon)	Syria, Eritrea, Iraq, Congo & Afghanistan

Data about other refugees: IRCC, 2017

# Trauma and its aftermath

- Almost all Yazidi families have had close **family members killed by Daesh**
- All families were **concerned about reuniting with family members** in Iraq
- **Trauma delays language learning**; several participants could not attend language classes as they had mental health and trauma issues
- **Professional translators needed** for medical appointments
  - **Female interpreters** are needed for female clients
- Teachers require & have asked for additional supports

# Pre-arrival Information

- The most important information to Yazidi was the **One Year Window of Opportunity** for family reunification
- **Workshops in Arabic** has caused much misinformation to be shared widely
- Low level of education and fluency in Arabic may have contributed to **low rate of retention of information**



*COA Workshop: March 2017 Turkey  
Photo credit: COA/IOM, 2018*

# Educational Attainment and Language Knowledge

- Most Yazidi have **not completed Grade 6**
- Many are **functionally illiterate** in Arabic and Kurmanji
- One-third not currently attending English classes
  - Presence of infants/young children at home
  - Caring for ill family members
  - Trauma challenges
- **Google Translate** is a popular app
- Need for more Kurmanji speaking translators
- Arabic is the language of their torturers



*Photo credit: Yazidi International, 2017*

# Housing Conditions

- Living in close proximity is preferred
- Proximity to grocery stores, schooling, language and settlement services results in earlier integration
- **Wayfinding** is difficult
- **Basement suites** are traumatizing to some
- Some evidence of **overcrowding** in houses
- Many worry about long-term financial stability and ability to maintain rent after **month 13**
- Some donated furniture in bad condition



Jeremiah's House, CCLC London  
Photo credit: CCLC, 2018



# Use of Settlement Services

- Generally **very satisfied** with the settlement sector
- Those who could cook for themselves tended to be more satisfied with reception centres
- Many felt “pushed” out of reception centre before they were ready to live independently
- Need for more **services** provided **for women by women**
- Interpretation by telephone is difficult
- Need for formal translation of official letters
- Half of all Yazidi use **food banks** at least once per month
- Budgeting and financial literacy is low

# Women & Independent Living

- Many very **young widowed mothers** in this community
- In Iraq, women were discouraged from being independent
- Women less likely to attend school
- The few adult males in this community are responsible for **caring for multiple families**



*Yazidi mother and daughter in Toronto;  
photo credit: C. Ellingson, 2017*

# Conclusions

<u>Recommendation</u>	<u>Our Report</u>	<u>Oliphant Report</u>	<u>IRCC Syrian Review 2018</u>
One Year Window of reunification	Longer window for “found” families	✓	
Settlement support	Help finding existing support	✓	✓
Housing assistance	Type of house, size & location	✓	✓
Assist single-parented households	Help women gain independence	✓	
Specialized trauma health services	More trauma specialists	✓	✓
Assistance for teachers	More trauma training		✓
English language training	Longer training needed	✓	✓
Kurmanji interpreters	More training opportunities	✓	

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