



A Report from the Yazda Documentation Project on

Mass Graves of Yazidis Killed by the Islamic State Organization or Local Affiliates On or After August 3, 2014

Date of this report: January 28, 2016



Introduction	3
<i>About Yazda</i>	3
<i>Yazda's Genocide Documentation Project</i>	3
<i>A Brief Background on the Yazidi Genocide</i>	3
The Mass Graves: Physical Evidence of Widespread Massacres	4
<i>"Mass Graves" vs. "Kill Sites"</i>	4
<i>Aims of Fieldwork</i>	5
<i>Methodology</i>	5
<i>Limitations of Data</i>	6
<i>Mapping the Mass Graves</i>	6
A) Mass grave sites confirmed by Yazda:	7
B) Locations of mass graves reported by survivors but where the grave site has not yet been identified:	16
C) Mass grave sites in liberated territories but not visited by Yazda:	17
D) Reported mass grave sites in territory still held by IS:	17
<i>A Sample of Known Kill Sites In Addition To Mass Graves</i>	17
<i>Sites of Massacres vs. Mass Grave Sites</i>	21
The Next Step	21
<i>Challenges of the Current Political Context</i>	21
<i>The Lack of Protection for Mass Graves Sites</i>	23
<i>The Need for Expert Forensic Analysis</i>	23
<i>The International Criminal Court</i>	23
Acknowledgements	24



Introduction

About Yazda

Yazda, registered as a 501(c)(3) organization in the U.S. and as a local NGO in the Kurdistan Region of Northern Iraq, was established August 2014 by Yazidi Americans following the campaign of ethnic cleansing and sexual enslavement that was conducted by the self-declared “Islamic State” (IS) militants. This campaign was part of a project of attempted genocide that sought to eradicate the Yazidi religion from the region. Yazda was formed to respond to the various needs of the displaced and traumatized Yazidi community. In addition to multiple humanitarian projects, Yazda engages in public advocacy on behalf of the Yazidi people. Yazda is active in most areas inhabited by Yazidis in Iraq. It has a U.S.-based board of Yazidi directors and an Iraq-based management team for in-country work, where it functions as a local NGO.

Yazda’s Genocide Documentation Project

On October 17, 2015, Yazda launched a genocide documentation project designed to procure as much material as possible on the attempted genocide campaign that IS (the group calling itself “The Islamic State”) conducted against the Yazidi people, which began on Aug. 3, 2014. Voices of Rwanda, active in documenting Rwanda’s genocide for many years, provided Yazda with training and support. Yazda’s documentation project focuses on: 1) survivor testimonies and the accounts of other witnesses to the events of Aug. 3; 2) mass graves of Yazidis in Sinjar; and 3) the physical destruction of Yazidi material culture and towns in an attempt to prevent Yazidis from returning to their homelands and effectively erase their presence from the region.

There are several objectives of Yazda’s documentation project: 1) to preserve the memory of what befell the Yazidi people beginning August 3, 2014 for the historical record; 2) to preserve knowledge about Yazidi culture as it existed in Sinjar prior to the attempted genocide; 3) to provide the international community with as detailed and accurate an account of the genocide campaign as possible; and 4) to collect evidence of crimes of genocide against the Yazidi people in the effort to secure genocide recognition for the Yazidi case.

Since Yazda began its documentation project, cataloging and photographing the mass graves of Yazidis in Sinjar has been a priority. These sites can provide valuable evidence regarding the genocidal intentions and actions of the IS jihadist group against the Yazidis, but the sites are at risk due to a lack of proper protection and the absence of a professional effort to properly document and analyze them.

A Brief Background on the Yazidi Genocide

Yazidis have been heavily persecuted under successive Islamic regimes due to several factors, including: 1) the perception that their religion contains polytheistic elements (Yazidis identify as



monotheists); 2) the identification of their traditional beliefs as “pagan;” 3) the fact that they have an oral tradition rather than a written scripture (the importance of a written scripture is a value emphasized in Islamic tradition); 4) a centuries-old libel that they are “devil worshippers” which emerged from perceived similarities between the Peacock Angel of Yazidi creation narratives (the highest manifestation of divinity in Yazidi religion) and the fallen chief angels Lucifer and Iblis of the Christian and Islamic traditions, respectively. Mainly due to these factors, Yazidis have been targeted with religious persecution repeatedly over several centuries. Under Ottoman rule, multiple campaigns to convert or eliminate the Yazidis were conducted, which resembled the IS campaign of 2014 in that they involved: 1) forced conversions to Islam; 2) massacres of Yazidi men who refused to convert; 3) the abduction and sexual enslavement of female Yazidis; 4) the destruction of Yazidi places of worship. The Yazidis continued to be marginalized and persecuted in the modern state of Iraq and suffered under Saddam’s Arabization schemes. During the U.S.-led war in Iraq, Islamist extremists targeted the Yazidis with some of the most deadly terror attacks against civilians of the entire duration of the war.

On August 3, 2014, IS began a campaign against the Yazidi religious minority in northern Iraq involving ethnic cleansing (mass executions), forced conversions, the destruction of temples, and the abduction and enslavement of several thousand Yazidis. The campaign began with armed assault against the Yazidi homelands in the Sinjar region and soon after against the Yazidi communities of the Nineveh Plain. These attacks resulted in the displacement of over 400,000 Yazidis (most of the minority’s population). Enslaved women and girls remain subjected to systematic sexual abuse and rape. The IS jihadist group issued public statements revealing their objective to convert or eliminate all Yazidis and explained that they believed that God would punish Muslims for having allowed a minority—whose religion does not qualify for protection under Islamic jurisprudence—to continue to exist in the region. The attempted genocide of the Yazidi people by IS was therefore conducted on the basis of their religious identity which IS sought to eliminate; Kurdish Sunnis living in Sinjar were not subjected to the atrocities with which the Yazidis were targeted.

The Mass Graves: Physical Evidence of Widespread Massacres

Kurdish forces regained control of the northern side of Sinjar Mountain December 19, 2014, and the city of Sinjar on the south side of the mountain was retaken by Kurdish forces November 12-13, 2015. These changes have provided access to many areas where mass graves have now been discovered. The Yazda team has been frequently visiting these sites, in addition to obtaining survivor testimonies that can help form a picture of what happened at each location.

“Mass Graves” vs. “Kill Sites”

In addition to the mass graves that have been discovered by the Yazda team or by Yazidis now visiting their home areas, Yazda has visited dozens of kill sites where individual Yazidis or small



numbers of Yazidis were executed. We distinguish between a mass grave and a “kill site” as follows: a kill site is a location where a small number of individuals were executed by IS but who were not buried—we do not therefore report the discovery of one or several bodies as a “mass grave;” a mass grave is a location where a massacre occurred and a large number of bodies remain. In most cases, these were fully or partially covered with earth by IS personnel. (Sometimes a pit was dug for the bodies which were then covered with earth; in a number of cases the bodies were left on the surface of the ground and a bulldozer was used to heap earth over them—those graves are now identifiable as large berms.) In one case that we know of, Yazidi fighters buried bodies of executed Yazidis that they encountered. At the moment, local people are tending to speak of a “mass grave” whenever they come upon unburied bodies on the surface of the ground. In most of the mass grave sites, there are bones protruding from the earth, and in some cases there are also bodies on the surface. However, we are endeavoring to identify sites where large numbers of massacred Yazidis were buried and to refer to these as mass graves. There is no accepted international definition for the number of bodies required to classify a site as a “mass grave.” Many refer to a few or bodies together in the same place as a mass grave. Most of the sites documented in this report contain more than 10 bodies, many contain closer to 100, and some may contain even more.

Aims of Fieldwork

The purpose of this report is to help the international community gain a sense of the scope of the killing of civilians that took place in Sinjar—particularly by profiling and mapping the grave sites that have been discovered so far; to raise awareness of the need to have the mass grave sites properly protected, investigated, and analyzed by forensic specialists; and ultimately to advance the case for genocide recognition for the Yazidi case.

Methodology

Yazda determines that a site is mass grave by two means: identifying physical evidence and corroborating with survivor testimonies. The first is performed through exploratory data collection in the local Sinjar environment, by searching out locations of mass graves and kill sites in the Sinjar vicinity. This involves unobtrusive examination of existing physical data in the form of disturbed earth, bones, clothing, and other personal effects that were left upon the ground in locations of suspected mass graves. In some cases Yazda members have encountered these sites on their own; in other cases, local people led Yazda members to sites that they had discovered or had knowledge of. This includes kill sites where usually only one or two people were killed and whose bodies were removed prior to Yazda’s visit, but where local people showed Yazda members the location where the executed bodies had been discovered. Yazda has taken note of the surroundings and physical evidence present in these locations, whether at a mass grave site or kill site.

The second form of data collection is performed through gathering survivor testimonies that can reveal details as to where massacres took place or where bodies were buried. Yazda has a studio



location visited by survivors who desire to share their account of the events surrounding August 3. These survivors have a clear understanding of the purpose behind gathering testimonies and conducting field work, and consent to the use of their testimony for documentation purposes. The personal identification information of these survivors is kept anonymous in the present report. Yazda has discovered many sites of mass graves through conducting these interviews.

If through our documentation project to record survivor narratives someone describes surviving a massacre in a particular location—or coming across the site of a recent massacre while fleeing to the mountain—and we then visit that site and discover a place with moved earth, possibly with scattered human remains on the surface or protruding from the disturbed earth, we then identify the site as a mass grave. In many cases, families were together when they were massacred, and Yazda can collect the list of names of people massacred in a given location from a single surviving family member. In one case, a man came upon a massacre site before the bodies had been buried and identified 71 of them as relatives or neighbors that he could recognize.

Interviews began in October 2015 and are ongoing; visits to mass graves and kill sites began after November 13, 2015 and are ongoing.

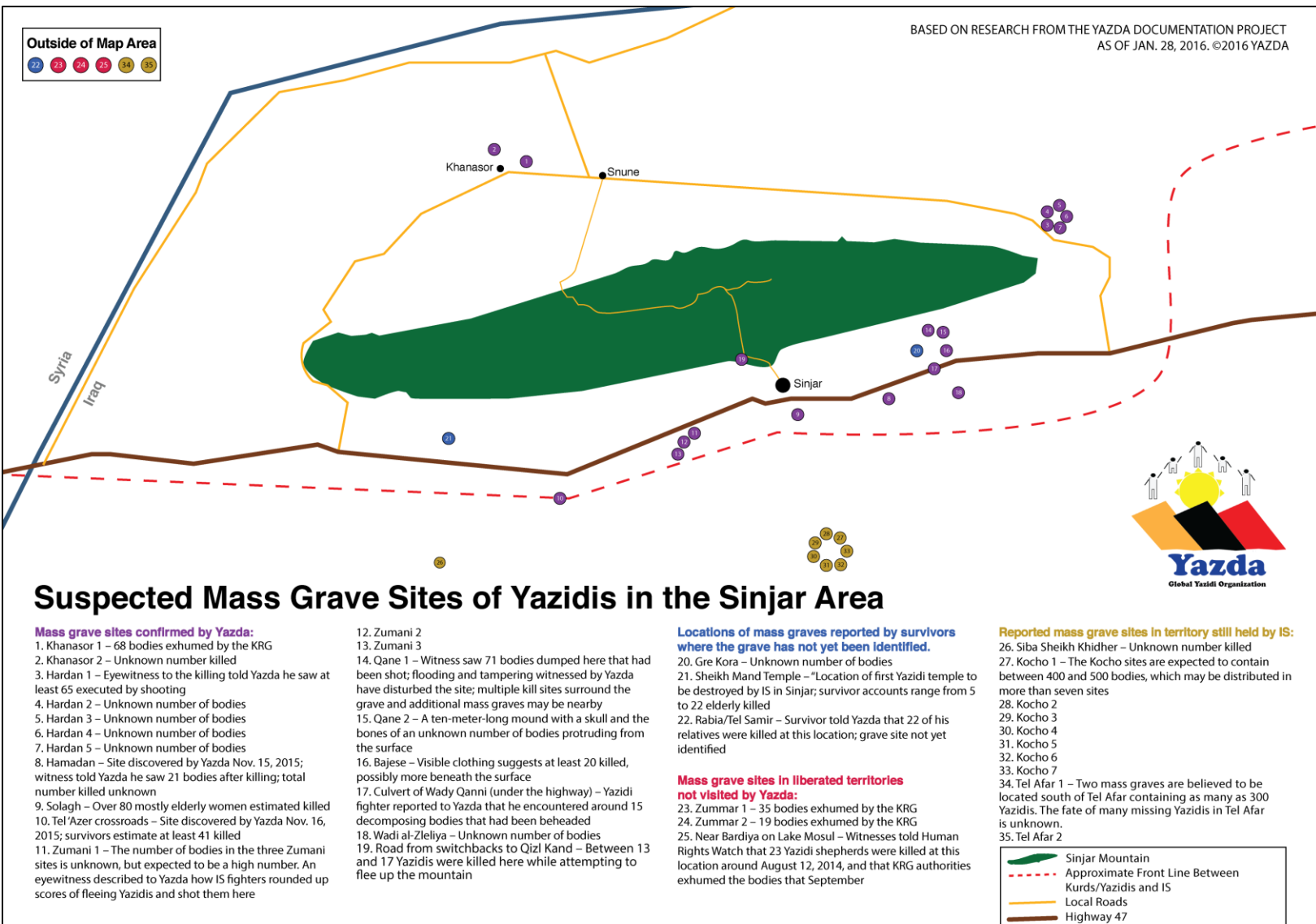
Limitations of Data

The information in this report should be understood as developing and not definitive. Yazda is limited in its investigative capacity in that we cannot exhume the remains of bodies to count or analyze them—that next step is the purview of forensic experts. Due to our limitations, some errors can occur regarding some presumed mass grave sites. Some sites are highly certain when they are corroborated with multiple survivor testimonies and when there is abundant physical evidence. Other sites require further investigation. In the future, some locations identified only as kill sites may turn out to be actual mass graves, and some supposed mass graves may be downgraded to kill sites. The reader will gain a sense of the confidence level regarding each site according to the evidence provided for each entry, below. The following list is by no means comprehensive, as more sites are expected to be discovered as the investigation continues. The material in this report therefore represents the clearest picture that Yazda has of the mass grave phenomenon as of the date of this report.

Mapping the Mass Graves

Data related to the grave sites on this map are laid out below. The mass grave sites on the map are divided into four categories:

- A) Mass grave sites confirmed by Yazda
- B) Locations of mass graves reported by survivors but where the grave site has not yet been identified
- C) Mass grave sites in liberated territories but not visited by Yazda
- D) Reported mass grave sites in territory still held by IS



A) Mass grave sites confirmed by Yazda:

1. Khanasor 1 – 68 bodies exhumed by the KRG – The mass grave site was located east of Khanasor behind a building housing chicken coops. The site was dug up in early 2015, shortly after the liberation of the area. The bodies were exhumed by the KRG under unknown circumstances. The site has largely been smoothed over by weather and is now hard to distinguish.

2. Khanasor 2 – Unknown number killed – Site is just north of Khanasor at the edge of a shallow ravine. An earthen mound approximately five meters long is located here, as well as clothes strewn about along with some visible bones. No account regarding the massacre has been obtained. The site was discovered by a shepherd after liberation. Only one site in Khanasor was excavated; bodies at this site have not been exhumed.

3. Hardan 1 – The first three Hardan sites are located thirty to forty meters from the intersection of the main road and the road leading to Hardan, on the east side of the intersection. At least 65 males were killed between the first three sites, according to an eyewitness to the massacre. Yazda interviewed the eyewitness who was from the small village of Gormiz which is located on

the foothills of the mountain on the south side of the main road, just below the intersection. The people of Gormiz fought to defend their village from IS, who were not able to take control of it for around 20 days or so. They were able to observe IS movements along the main road, and also witnessed the massacre at the Hardan crossroads. On Aug. 3, IS conducted this massacre of Yazidis who were trying flee along the main road. People from Gormiz watched through binoculars as the massacre occurred. The grave is an approximately ten-meter-long mound.

4. Hardan 2 – Unknown number of bodies – The second Hardan site is similarly ten meters long and is partially dug up at the surface.

5. Hardan 3 – Unknown number of bodies – The third Hardan site is twenty meters long and consists of two, possibly three mounds. They are well grown over with weeds after 15 months.

6. Hardan 4 – Unknown number of bodies – The fourth and fifth mass graves are also near the intersection of the main road and the road leading to Hardan, but on the west side of the road leading to Hardan.

7. Hardan 5 – Unknown number of bodies



Part of the Hamadan site—Photo: Yazda



Part of the Hamadan site after tampering – Photo: Yazda

8. Hamadan – Site discovered by Yazda on Nov. 15, 2015 (two days after the liberation of Sinjar City) – At least 21 Yazidis are believed to have been killed here; total number unknown. The site is 100 meters south of a Peshmerga position occupying an abandoned house on the south side of Highway 47. The mass grave is in a nearby field, 200-300 meters north of the town of Hamadan proper. Upon a second visit by Yazda to the site around a month later, Yazda members found that the mass grave had been tampered with. Someone had gathered the exposed bones and shoes together in rows and had placed the shell casings in piles. The site is a shallowly-dug approximately ten-meter-long berm with exposed bones lying around the site. Clothing and other personal items are scattered around.

There were 84 members of a larger extended family that were separated (men from women) in this location. The family were farmers and there was a group of houses in Hamadan that housed this family. The family did not flee on Aug. 3. On Aug. 4, IS came to their farmlands and rounded them up. The women were locked inside a building and the men were massacred at this site. Only one male family member survived, because he was not in the area on Aug. 3. He was interviewed by Yazda. He reconstructed the massacre event through the testimony of kidnapped female family members who were later rescued. The



Nadia Murad speaking before the UN Security Council on the Yazidi genocide, Dec. 16, 2015

women saw IS jihadists marching the males to a bean field and then heard the shots. The Yazda team photographed the bones at this location. Of the 84 family members, 63 were women and children that were hauled off.

9. Solagh – A massacre of mostly elderly women who were brought to this location from Kocho on Aug. 15, 2014, estimated to be over 80 in number, occurred here. Just south of the Solagh Technical Institution buildings destroyed by ISIS is an empty pool which was converted into the mass grave. It resembles the foundation of a building. The site is covered over, but clothing and bone debris are in the vicinity. Solagh is a wadi coming down from the northeast side of Sinjar city spanning the highway. Maps show Solagh as north of the highway, but the mass grave is in the part of Solagh that is south of the highway. IS held the people of Kocho for some time while encouraging them to convert to Islam. The men and women of Kocho were later separated and moved. The women were held at the Solagh Technical Institution. Later, elderly women were separated (presumably those who refused to convert to Islam). As the younger women were being taken out to be transferred to Tel Afar and Mosul, they heard the gunshots and screams of the older women. Nadia Murad, who has been speaking publicly with Murad Ismael, is a survivor from this location, and her mother was one of those massacred.



The pool with earth filled in over the bodies and the now-destroyed Solagh Technical Institute in the background – Photo: Yazda

Illustrating the problem of the lack of protection for the grave sites, when members of Yazda's documentation team visited this site, they observed local journalists inside the pool, walking over the grave, and handling the contents, despite the fact that it had police tape around its perimeter. Yazda also noted that the clothing, wallets, and other personal items that had belonged to the victims and that were strewn on the ground were removed after the site was discovered. Further, this was the only grave site Yazda found where government authorities had taken measures to demarcate the site with tape.



The pool containing a mass grave at the Solagh Technical Institute – Photo: Yazda

10. Tel ‘Azar crossroads – Site discovered by Yazda on Nov. 16, 2015; survivors estimate at least 41 massacred. Yazda interview a 14-year-old survivor of this massacre who was counted as a child and separated off from the male population that was killed. The people here were farmers. The family that was massacred had stayed at the crossroads to give water to Yazidis that were fleeing from the south. IS massacred the families that lived here as well as some families that had stopped here to rest while fleeing. The boy and his mother fled to the mountain when the



Bones and skull fragments at one of the three mass graves in Zumani, near Sinjar City. Clothing suggests that men, women, and children were killed in this location. Photo: Yazda

shooting began. Yazda also interviewed the mother. The grandmother of the boy stayed inside the house which was surrounded by dead bodies for three days, until she also escaped to the mountain. Three of her sons were among those massacred. The family believes that at least 41 people were killed there, but there may have been more, because they did not know all of the people who were passing by. The bodies were left in the open, but animals have carried off many of the bones, and IS also demolished a house which fell on some of the bodies. The bones are now spread out over a large area. A local Arab witness told Yazda that Arabs living in the area complained to the jihadists because the smell was so bad from the decomposing bodies that they could not come to the nearby well to get water. After that, IS had someone bring a bulldozer to bury some of the bodies. They used the bulldozer to destroy the house and put the rubble over some of the bodies.

11. Zumani 1 – The number of bodies contained in the three Zumani sites is unknown, but expected to be a high number. These sites contain bodies of Yazidis who were rounded up as they were fleeing up the switchbacks on the road going up the mountain from the city. Yazda interviewed a Yazidi fighter who sat at the foot of the mountain with binoculars and watched as IS brought truckloads of people from Sinjar City who were shot in this location. Clothing and shoes seen at these three sites by Yazda suggest that those killed may have been a mix of women, men, and children.



Bones, skull fragments, a jawbone, and a football jersey at one of the Zumani sites. Photo: Martha Hudson

A large mass grave is located at the edge of a ravine where bodies were left on the surface and then covered over with earth. (No pit was dug in which to place the bodies; nearby areas are present where earth was dug up to be placed over the bodies.) It was shallow and the site is partially exposed with bones visible and scattered about nearby. Clothing is also strewn near the site. It is a twenty meter long berm.



Piles of bones with clothing at one of the Zumani sites. Photo: Martha Hudson

12. Zumani 2 – The second large mass grave at the Zumani site is perhaps 200 meters from the first. It is similar to the first with bodies laid on the ground and covered over with earth. Exposed bones and clothing are strewn around the site. It is a berm approximately fifteen meters long.



Bones, blood-stained clothing, and a skull at one of the Zumani sites. Photo: Martha Hudson

13. Zumani 3 – The third large mass grave at Zumani is another 100 meters from the second site. It is similar to the other two with bodies laid on the ground and covered over with earth. Exposed bones and clothing are strewn about the site. Bones are scattered in a large radius from each site as if by animals.



Bone and skull fragments, shell casings, and clothing at one of the Zumani sites. Photo: Martha Hudson

14. Qine 1 – 71 bodies seen by witness following massacre (site destroyed by flooding and tampering). This grave is surrounded by multiple kill sites and there may be additional mass graves here. After rainfall, bodies were reportedly washed down the ravine and had been recovered. The site has been covered over with earth to prevent further degradation. In the process, three bodies were reburied on higher ground. The site is now flattened and covered with fresh earth with marks where a bulldozer drove over it. Burned clothing, wallets, sandals, and shoes are located in the vicinity as well as pieces of bone, well away from the site. A series of at least six linked, pressure-plate improvised explosive devices were buried by IS on the approach to the site and had to be cleared before the site was examined.

Yazda interviewed a survivor whose son was massacred at this site on Aug. 3. The same day, he snuck down from the mountain to try to retrieve his son's body, but was shot at by jihadists. The man came back with family members the next days and managed to retrieve bodies of three relatives. They counted 71 bodies of people that they knew and recognized. There were seven people still alive who survived the massacre but were wounded, having been shot. The man

interviewed by Yazda and those with him managed to rescue these seven. Yazda interviewed a second survivor whose family was also massacred at this site. His estimate is that 80-90 were massacred in all of Qine.

15. Qine 2 – Unknown number killed – Mass grave approximately fifty meters from a dirt road leading north toward the mountains, well away from settlements. It is adjacent to a small blockhouse next to a rusted truck hulk. This grave is a ten-meter-long mound with exposed bones and a prominent top half of a skull. The number of bodies under the surface is unknown.



Skulls from a kill site near Qine; photo provided to Yazda by an anonymous Yazidi fighter

16. Bajese – This location is north of Tel Wusifka, east of Gre Kora, and 200 meters north of the highway. Visible clothing suggests at least 20 people killed here. The clothing is of the kind worn by traditional Yazidis. There are bones on the surface and more bodies below the surface. There is another kill site about 35 meters east of the mass grave. At the second site are some bones and a skull on the surface where some executions took place. The people massacred at this location were from Tel Qasab and Tel Banat who were fleeing north to the mountain when they were intercepted by IS.

17. Culvert of Wadi Qine (under the highway) – a ditch for water running under the highway itself, water coming from the valley of Qine. Water has washed the bodies away, but bloodstains are still on the concrete. A Yazidi fighter encountered the bodies there while they were decomposing. He didn't count them but thought that he saw about 15 bodies. The bodies were reportedly beheaded, not shot.

18. Wadi al-Zleliya – Unknown number of bodies – This location is south of the highway in the Tel Wusifka area. Most of the remains seem to be on the surface of the ground in this site. Yazda has also found four individual kill sites near the main site, with at least seven bodies (or partial remains) on top of the ground.

19. Road from switchbacks to Qizl Kand – This site is located near the first switchback of the road that leads up Mount Sinjar from Sinjar City. From that point, an unpaved road heads southwest to Qizl Kand. Around 500 meters down that road from the switchbacks, 13-17 people were massacred, including men, women, and children. This was the main route by which Yazidis were

fleeing up the mountain. Yazda took the testimony of a Yazidi fighter who witnessed the massacre and visited the site Jan. 25, 2016. The witness could not remember the exact date he had seen the massacre, but said that it was soon after Aug. 4, probably Aug. 5 or 6. The bodies were not buried by IS but by Yazidi fighters affiliated with Qasim Shevan.



Mass grave at Wadi al-Zleliya — Photo: Yazda

B) Locations of mass graves reported by survivors but where the grave site has not yet been identified:

20. Gre Kora – North of the highway, northwest of Wadi al-Zleliya, 2 km & 200 meters south of Qine; Gre Kora is west of Bajese – Unknown number of bodies – The bodies are under the surface and no count has been conducted. A local person interviewed by Yazda spoke with a female survivor who said that three truckloads of men were buried alive here in a deep grave. (This is not the only location with reports of people being buried alive.) Also alleged is that those killed were only males. However, this remains a second-hand account as Yazda has not yet been able to locate and interview the survivor.

21. Sheikh Mand Temple – This is the site of the first holy place in Sinjar that IS destroyed. There are varying accounts as to the number of people killed here. One survivor recounted fleeing while five others were massacred; other accounts claim that as many as 22 elderly people were killed inside the Yazidi temple before or as it was destroyed. Yazda has not been able to inspect the site to gather more answers because the road has been washed out and the area is now inaccessible.

22. Rabia/Tel Samir – According to testimony of a survivor from Gohbal interviewed by Yazda, 22 of his family members were killed at this location. The family's Muslim kref [a kind of godfather relationship practiced by people of the area which helped establish bonds between Yazidi and Muslim families] tried to get them to safety. A truck was brought by a Muslim driver to evacuate the family, but at a checkpoint near Tel Samir, jihadists abducted the family and took them to Tel



Samir. The survivor spoke to female family members in captivity who reported that the men had been executed. The grave site not yet discovered and the exact number killed is not known. Yazda has the names of the 22 family members that were killed. So far, IDs and mobile phones have been found but no bodies.

C) Mass grave sites in liberated territories but not visited by Yazda:

23. Zummar 1 – 35 bodies discovered and exhumed by the KRG in September 2014.

24. Zummar 2 – 19 bodies discovered and exhumed by the KRG in February 2015.

25. Near Bardiya on Lake Mosul – This site was visited by Human Rights Watch who also interviewed witnesses. Around Aug. 12, 2014, three pickup trucks with 23 persons in the back were driven down a dry ravine known as Company Valley near the pumping station for irrigating the northern Nineveh plains. Witnesses identified the 23 as a family of Yazidi shepherds and farmhands from Sinjar who were working nearby for the summer. Two people, dressed in attire typical for IS fighters, brought the bound and blindfolded people, while two others executed them with pistol shots to the back of the head, and two more flung their bodies into the shallow lake. The next day, with the bodies smelling, a digger was brought to rebury the bodies on land. A judge, policemen, and Anfal Ministry representatives took the bodies away Sept. 2014. The names of two of the alleged executioners are known.

D) Reported mass grave sites in territory still held by IS:

26. Siba Sheikh Khidher – Unknown number massacred

27. Kocho 1 – The Kocho sites are expected to contain between 400 and 500 bodies. The number seven is somewhat arbitrary. Yazda collected survivor testimonies from two men who survived massacres in Kocho who confirm four massacre/mass grave sites. Yazidi researcher Dawood Murad Khadari conducted interviews with women who were held in Kocho prior to their enslavement who reported seven sites. People were executed in Kocho in groups of around 30 each; therefore, in total there are likely to be more than seven sites.

28. Kocho 2 | 29. Kocho 3 | 30. Kocho 4

31. Kocho 5 | 32. Kocho 6 | 33. Kocho 7

34. Tel Afar 1 – Two mass graves are believed to be located south of Tel Afar containing as many as 300 Yazidis. The fate of many missing Yazidis in Tel Afar is unknown.

35. Tel Afar 2

A Sample of Known Kill Sites In Addition To Mass Graves

This section details sites where individuals were discovered having been executed. All of the information in this section was procured by Yazda by visiting towns (primarily on the north side of the mountain) and interviewing returnees who had discovered bodies of executed Yazidis after instances of liberation. In a few cases, Yazda came upon or were shown human remains that were still on the ground. This is a very partial list and should not be considered remotely



comprehensive. Many sites have not yet been discovered. Other sites discovered in liberated territory are likely known to other Yazidis but have not yet been reported to Yazda, and many more exist in the areas still held by IS on the south side of the mountain. There are still a number of locations inside liberated territory where Yazda has not yet been able to complete this survey. Yazda has taken GPS coordinates of all these sites but those coordinates have been omitted from this report.

- 1) Khanasor – Inside a house across from the current YPG headquarters; four bodies were discovered. Two were believed to be disabled and two were children. The bodies were removed after the liberation of the area.
- 2) Khanasor – Unconfirmed: A child, hanged inside a house, was found by a female YBŞ fighter while clearing buildings for bombs. Body was already removed.
- 3) Snune – Behind a row of shops in central Snune, three men were shot and executed in a back lot. They were from Borek and were caught coming down from the mountain to search for provisions. The bodies have already been removed.
- 4) Snune – Circle of the main intersection in Snune: One male body was found and removed during the Dec. 2014 liberation.
- 5) Snune – A father was executed at the steps of a storefront at the main row of shops in Snune. His son is known to have been killed elsewhere, location unknown. The man was from Khanasor. The man's name is known to Yazda.
- 6) Snune – At a site north of Snune away from the town, three men were executed in a ravine. Their bodies were found with their hands tied behind their backs. One was disabled and his wheelchair was found at the site. Their names are known to Yazda. The bodies have been removed.
- 7) Snune – The body of an approximately 70-year-old woman was found after liberation (on Dec. 24, 2014), having been executed in her own home. Her name is known to Yazda. The body has been removed.
- 8) Snune – The bodies of a husband and wife executed in their home were found at this site after liberation in the courtyard, in the back garden patch by the stairs. Their names are known to Yazda and they were believed to be in their sixties. The bodies have been removed.
- 9) Snune – The body of an approximately 75-year-old woman who was executed in her home was found after the liberation. Her name is known to Yazda. She was killed in her garden. The body has been removed.
- 10) Snune – The bodies of a husband and wife who were executed in their home were found after the liberation. They were approximately 65-70 years old. Their names are known to Yazda. The bodies have been removed.
- 11) Snune – The body of a woman executed in her home was found after the liberation. Her name is known to Yazda. She was approximately 55 years old. The body has been removed.



12) Snune – A woman was found executed in her home after the liberation, located on the same road as the previous entry. She was approximately 80 years old and her name is known to Yazda.

13) Dugure – An old woman living in a small, simple building by the roadside was executed by IS after she reportedly insulted them. Both of her sons died in the Iran-Iraq war and she had been living as a recluse. Her body was reportedly burned and later found after the liberation. The body has been removed. Her name is known to Yazda.

14) Dugure – Three men were killed in this location after they descended the mountain to scavenge for food. One of them was from Dugure and the other two were from Siba Sheikh Khider. They were caught by IS and executed. Their bodies were recovered after the liberation and removed.

15) Dohola – A man (age 30) and another (age 41) (names are known to Yazda) were executed here on August 5th. They were taken from their homes to the north end of town and shot.

16) Dohola – A man (age 31) was killed while resisting IS; exact location unknown. He was killed between in an area between Dohola and Borek in an area known as Gregawre.

17) Dohola – The body of a man (age 40, name known to Yazda) was found south of the main highway outside Dohola, exact location unknown. Another man whose name is known to Yazda was with him when he was killed. The body was encountered on the 19th of September, 2014 by someone sneaking into the area (still controlled by IS at that time).

18) Dohola – Three men were executed on the 5th of August at this location. Their names are known to Yazda. One of them had a physical disability and could not move.

19) Dohola – A group of four elderly men captured by IS were taken to this location outside Dohola and executed on the 5th of August. Their names are known to Yazda, and at least one of them was in his 90s.

20) Dohola – A man whose name is known to Yazda was killed by an IS-planted mine on a road west of Duhola on March 22, 2015.

21) Gohbal – A man whose name is known to Yazda was killed in the farmlands north of Gohbal while clearing IS-planted mines in July 2015.

22) Zorava – A father and his 20-year-old developmentally disabled daughter were killed at a house at this location. The father was executed in front of the house and the daughter was executed inside it. The father's name is known to Yazda. They were killed August 3rd and found in December upon the liberation and were buried in the local cemetery.

23) Zorava – Three men were killed and burned in a gully in the middle of the town of Zorava. The exact location is not known. Their bodies were taken by their families after the liberation. Their names are known to Yazda. One was 65-70 years old. Their houses were located near the site of the killing.

24) Zorava – Two men in their 70s whose names are known to Yazda were executed in their home; their bodies were found after liberation.



25) Zorava – IS jihadists drove up to a Yazidi home in a water tanker truck left by the fleeing Peshmerga. A Yazidi man whose name is known to Yazda thought it was the Peshmerga outside his home and went out to invite them in for tea. He was captured along with three other men whose names are known to Yazda, including one who was a kochak (one of several kinds of Yazidi religious figures). All the men were over 50 years old and all were taken to the crossroads and killed.

26) Zorava – A man whose name is known to Yazda was killed resisting IS at the crossroads and a second was killed while clearing vehicles in the same location by a wounded IS fighter.

27) Zorava – Two men were killed by a mine in the road which exploded under their vehicle. They were 24 and 50 years of age respectively and their names are known to Yazda. Clarification is needed as to whether this occurred post-liberation or if the men had descended the mountain while IS still controlled Zorava.

28) Hardan – Three men were killed by a booby-trap while attempting to access their home after the liberation. A large bomb exploded which also badly injured two others. They were killed on Dec. 20, 2014. Their names (and those of the injured) are known to Yazda and the ages of two of the three that were killed were 36 and 45.

29) Near Sinjar Mountain south of Hardan – A man whose name is known to Yazda was killed fighting IS near a house between Hardan and Sinjar Mountain. He suffered a gunshot wound to the head during a March 2015 battle and died after being rushed to Duhok.

30) Eastern Sinjar Mountain – A shepherd discovered the bones (Dec. 2015) of two men who he believed were Yazidis well up in the mountain in a ravine. Their bones and clothing had been washed down the ravine and scattered by rain; the original location is uncertain. Their identities remain unknown. Pieces of skull, femurs, and other bone fragments were visible when Yazda went to the location.

31) East of Sinjar City – An elderly couple in their 80s were executed in the road and buried next to it inside this small village. The son of the victims was present to tell the story of their execution as he had received a call from the killer immediately afterward. His name is known to Yazda.

32) Near the previous entry – Approximately four hundred meters south on the road leading back to Highway 47 lies a possible second small grave mound on the roadside.

33) Mihrga – This site is located three kilometers north of Qine at the foot of the mountain. Yazda found three bodies on the ground in this site. Elderly people were also abandoned here during the fleeing, and they died while trying to climb the mountain.

The above is a sample list of kill sites that Yazda has found or been led to; Yazda has visited scores of additional sites that will take time to document and may be included in a future report. Though the mass graves will receive a great deal of attention, it is important to be aware that the entire Sinjar vicinity is littered with kill sites where executions of one or several people took place.



Sites of Massacres vs. Mass Grave Sites

This report has provided descriptions of sites where bodies have been found, not necessarily locations where massacres occurred. Most mass graves and kill sites are in the same location where the killing took place, but in some instances, people were executed in one location and the bodies were then moved. An example would be the massacre of Hay al-Naser (inside Sinjar city, on its east side) where a Muslim eyewitness reported to Yazidis from the area that 135 were massacred, possibly including some Shi'is. However, the resting place of these bodies remains undiscovered. A report exploring the locations of massacres will constitute a much grander undertaking than this report, because it will involve reconstructing the history that unfolded in countless locations around Sinjar in the first two weeks of the crisis, by acquiring a far greater number of survivor testimonies. The Yazda Documentation Project is pursuing this objective, but it will require long-term research to gain a complete picture of the events of even the first few days of the IS assault.

The Next Step

Challenges of the Current Political Context

The majority of the Yazidi community was displaced on Aug. 3, 2014, and over 300,000 remain displaced in camps inside the Dohuk governorate of the Kurdistan Region. Thousands have migrated to Europe, and the numbers of those drowning in the Mediterranean while trying to cross from Turkey to Greece are increasing. Without a major effort sponsored by the international community to rebuild the Sinjar area, as well as a political and security solution to ensure that future campaigns of genocide do not occur, hopelessness will deepen among the Yazidi people, the majority of whom already question whether any viable future in Sinjar is possible. While rebuilding efforts are possible now on the north side of Sinjar Mountain, there has not been an active push on the part of the Kurdish or Iraqi governments to make it happen. Further, most Yazidi areas on the south side of the mountain remain under IS control. Three things are needed for Yazidis to go home: 1) Restored security and a plan to guarantee security in the future; 2) The return of services (electricity, water, education, and health care); and 3) Rebuilding. All three of these needs are slow to materialize due to the current political context.

In a nutshell, a political competition is preventing the Yazidis from returning to Sinjar. The most significant factor in this competition is a deep rift that was created between the Yazidis and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) after they were abandoned at Sinjar on Aug. 3 by the Peshmerga forces responsible for their protection. IS had seized the major cities of Mosul, Tikrit, and Tel 'Afar two months prior to the attack on Sinjar, which provided ample time to prepare defenses in Sinjar. IS forces began attacking other areas near Sinjar prior to Aug. 3, and people were well aware of the attitudes of IS toward religious minorities. Many Peshmerga had acquired



weapons left by the fleeing Iraqi army, and they had the advantage of holding the high ground on Sinjar Mountain. As it became apparent that the IS attack on Sinjar was impending, many Yazidi communities were assured that reinforcements were on their way, and that they should stay in their villages where they would be protected. When the IS attack began on Aug. 3, however, Peshmerga forces did not merely collapse in a few areas, but all Peshmerga in the Sinjar region pulled out and left the area. Yazidis asked the fleeing Peshmerga to leave behind weapons that they could use to defend the area, but were refused. These events were devastating for the Yazidi community; had they been defended for one day, they could have been evacuated safely and the massacres and enslavement crisis could have been averted.

This scenario destroyed trust between the Yazidis and the KRG. After IS surrounded the mountain, thousands of displaced Yazidis remained trapped on top. Small groups of Yazidi fighters were able to prevent IS from ascending the roads leading up the mountain. The trapped Yazidis were rescued by Syrian Kurdish fighters belonging to the YPG, a PKK affiliate. Though their weapons and equipment were inferior, YPG crossed the border into Iraq, broke through IS lines and established a corridor through which to evacuate the entrapped Yazidis into Syria, where many traveled back into Iraq to settle in the camps in Dohuk. The corridor allowed PKK fighters to enter the mountain, and they maintained the front line against IS inside the city of Sinjar (on the south side of the mountain) for over 15 months until the city was liberated. This role has now allowed the PKK to establish a strong presence as a new player on the ground in the Sinjar area.

The PKK brings a political ideology that is largely foreign to the traditional culture of Sinjar's conservative Yazidis. However, the fact that the PKK and its affiliates evacuated thousands of Yazidi civilians from the threatened area, defended them, and fed them (the PKK has been the largest food donor for displaced Yazidis in Sinjar since Aug. 3, 2014), has meant the growth of new sympathies among Yazidis for the PKK. The crux of this is that if large numbers of displaced Yazidis return to Sinjar, the support base for the PKK in that area may grow. Knowing this, the KRG has had little incentive to spearhead or advocate for internationally-sponsored reconstruction efforts or the return of services, which can explain the snail's pace at which the chance to resolve this crisis is progressing. Understanding these basics is integral for understanding the Yazidi problem—and for understanding how to solve it.

This background may also explain why there has been little enthusiasm on the part of the local government to talk about the mass graves, or to actively pursue documentation projects. In over a year since the liberation of the north side of the mountain, no public report that Yazda is aware of has been issued by the KRG on the mass graves and no findings of any documentation efforts have been published. While we are aware of and sympathetic to the difficult fiscal situation of the KRG at present, we insist that a full and transparent account of the crimes against humanity around Sinjar must be an urgent priority if we are to restore the faith of the Yazidi people (who provide a bulwark for the Kurdish-speaking region against IS forces in western Iraq), secure the justice that they deserve, and enable them to reclaim their homeland.

The Lack of Protection for Mass Graves Sites

Along with the lack of progress in officially documenting the mass graves or in vigorously pursuing assistance from the international community in conducting forensic analyses of the sites, all of the mass graves visited by Yazda remain entirely unprotected. The sites have been damaged by journalists, soldiers, and local people trying to understand what may have happened to their relatives. Immediately following the liberation of Sinjar City in November, 2015, the Yazda director and staff members engaged numerous high-level Kurdish officials, requesting that they take immediate action to protect the mass graves from tampering, so that documentation and forensic analysis efforts could be properly conducted. Valuable evidence of crimes of genocide against the Yazidi people is at risk when the integrity of the mass grave sites is not guaranteed. Though Peshmerga soldiers have often posed for the camera whenever journalists are escorted to Sinjar to visit a grave site, each time that Yazda visits the sites there is no one guarding any of them. All sites are currently open to tampering by any visitor.

The Need for Expert Forensic Analysis

We ask for the international community to immediately urge the Kurdish and Iraqi governments to ensure that these sites are protected now so that proper documentation and analysis on the part of qualified experts be conducted. Yazda's Documentation Project can collect valuable survivor testimony and can map and photograph mass graves, but it is beyond our capabilities to exhume remains and conduct forensic analysis. This is the purview of trained professionals, and Yazda invites qualified parties to coordinate with us in pursuing the objective of genocide documentation.

The International Criminal Court

On Sept. 24, 2015, Yazda submitted a report to the International Criminal Court requesting that a preliminary investigation into crimes of genocide against the Yazidis be conducted. In a welcome move, the Kurdistan government sent the KRG's foreign minister to attend and support the submission, who afterwards on his social media used the terminology of a "Yazidi genocide"—the first time that we noted a Kurdish official using such language. Though Yazidis still await any public apology or discussion on the events of Aug. 3—and the prosecutions of commanders in Sinjar who abandoned them—this marked a significant and welcome shift in the official rhetoric regarding the Yazidi case.



The KRG foreign minister attending the submission of the report to the ICC



By the time that Yazda submitted its report to the ICC, the Yazidi community had waited 13 months for the KRG to publicly call for the world to recognize the crimes of genocide that IS committed against the Yazidis. And at present, the mass graves on the north side of the mountain have been inside liberated territory for over a year now. This is a long time to ignore the issue of mass graves, and a long time to neglect the larger Yazidi problem.

Now that more mass graves have recently become accessible, it is important that a concerned inquiry into the Yazidi situation be resumed. We hope that the ICC will take action now to follow up on the report that we initially submitted, and to investigate the crimes that occurred in Sinjar. Though Iraq is not a signatory to the Rome Statute which establishes membership in the ICC and therefore cannot refer cases to the ICC, the UN Security Council has the ability to refer a case to the ICC. Nadia Murad recently (December 2015) presented aspects of the crimes against Yazidis to the Security Council, and we hope that the Council will take action in enabling the ICC to conduct its investigation here.

Investigations into the crimes of genocide that IS waged against the Yazidis should be conducted now—on the part of the ICC and other relevant institutions—because the evidence is now available.

Acknowledgements

This report was prepared by Matthew Barber, Executive Director of Yazda, with research data obtained by Ali Khalaf (Documentation Project Manager), Andrew Slater (documentation and research support), and other members of the Yazda documentation team. Other Yazda members who contributed to this report include Jameel Ghanem Chomer (Manager of Operations) and Mahmood 'Ajo (Sinjar Outreach Project Manager).

Yazda is grateful to The Zovighian Partnership for graphic design assistance and to Martha Hudson for several photographs taken in November 2015. All Yazda photos were taken between November and December, 2015.

For further questions and information on Yazda's Documentation Project, please contact Andrew Slater: Andrew.slater5@gmail.com +964 / (0) 750.109.8567

For Arabic or Kurdish language media requests, please contact Jameel Chomer: sinjarcrisis12@gmail.com +964 / (0) 750.704.3819 or Ali Khalaf: +964 / (0) 750.108.8239

For English language media requests for written quotes, please contact Andrew Slater: Andrew.slater5@gmail.com; for English language media requests for radio or television, please contact Matthew Barber: mtb@uchicago.edu