

... for immediate release ...

What are a country's international moral obligations during a pandemic?

During Covid-19, does Canada have the moral obligation to save lives and alleviate suffering during the post-war crisis in Sinjar?

The Yazidi are being pressured to leave the refugee camps they fled to in 2014 and return to their homeland in Sinjar, despite the life-threatening conditions there. An estimated 150,000 Yazidi people have returned to Sinjar with more arriving each day.

But, Sinjar is a land shattered by ISIS: bombed out buildings, infrastructure destroyed. Oppressive Covid-19 policies and procedures interfere with already deeply inadequate medical care. Yazidi women and girl survivors of ISIS enslavement are suffering severe trauma. On top of this, ISIS planted hundreds of thousands of landmines as they retreated from Sinjar during the war.

“The situation in Sinjar is very bad medically and mentally. We have thousands of [Covid-19] cases in Sinjar infected and a hundred deaths until now. Last two days in one day we had five suicidal cases. The oldest one was younger than 25 years old. I talked with the French government and they are happy to see a proposal to build a medical center to save many lives in the future. So I'm going to write a proposal. I will show it to them, they hope that Nadia will help. ... I hope if you can do something you will take care of this seriously.”

Sinjar Dr., Oct 21, 2020

What can Canada do?

Put pressure on regional governments including Iraq, Kurdistan, and the UN Security Council, to ensure that the Yazidi can return home and live in Sinjar without harassment or harm.

Provide immediate humanitarian assistance and offer practical help by providing safe drinking water and clearing land mines in the Sinjar region.¹

Consult with Nadia Murad. *Nadia's Initiative* is already working to alleviate the crisis in Sinjar. After safety and security, WASH is one of their key goals – Water, Sanitation and Hygiene.²

Work with France and our colleague, the doctor in Sinjar quoted above, to design and build a new medical centre there. The French government has invited the doctor to submit plans to build a desperately needed medical facility. (To preserve his safety, we are not naming him publicly.)

Nadia's Initiative is making exemplary efforts to provide support in Sinjar, and yet, “ISIS left behind a community that will not recover without the support of the International community.”³

Women Refugees Advocacy Project

<https://womenrefugeesadvocacyproject.ca/wrapforjustice@gmail.com>

¹ Canada has 2,000 troops already stationed in Iraq.

² <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/WASH>

³ Nadia Murad, CIFAL Newcastle, July 31, 2020: ...Today 2,000 Yazidi women and children are still in captivity, including my sister-in-law, my niece and my nephew. We have more than 85 mass graves in Sinjar right now.

<https://cifal.newcastle.edu.au/nobel-laureate-nadia-murad-joins-trevor-noah-to-remind-the-world-2000-yazidis-remain-in-captivity/>