



Religious Persecution: The Driver for Forced Migration

Windsor 10-14 September 2016

Short Report

Narrative Summary and Recommendations

Charity Number 1047432

FOREWORD TO THE SHORT REPORT

It was a great honour for us to be able to hold this important conference in the prestigious surroundings of Windsor Castle. It is the principal home of Her Majesty The Queen, who graciously permitted us to be there. Her representative, the Constable and Governor of the Castle, Admiral Sir James Perowne, opened it for us. Windsor Castle has for a thousand years been at the heart of English history and, as the Governor reminded us, it became the epicentre of religious division when, in the Civil Wars of the mid-seventeenth century, it was the final prison of King Charles I.

This conference was in many ways the culmination of AMAR's work in recent years. The whole world has been shocked by ISIS and its cruelty, but what we sought to do at this conference was to find the underlying causes of such behaviour and to propose ways forward for when the conflicts are diminished and eventually over, as assuredly they will be. This was therefore planned to be a practical conference seeking solutions to the long-term problems brought about by so much conflict and forced migration. Our aim will be nothing less than to produce a new kind of Marshall Plan for the Yazidis in particular and the Middle Eastern region generally.

We were therefore greatly privileged to be able to focus on the plight of the Yazidis and their ancient culture and religion. We are not aware of any other conference in Europe that has done this to the same extent. The presence of the Prince of the Yazidis, spiritual head of his community, strengthened our resolve and ensured that everyone there was well informed about his people.

This conference set out examples from German, Jewish, Rwandan and other histories to see how reconciliation and reconstruction can emerge after long conflicts. The case of the First Nation North Americans, as told from the heart by a descendant of survivors of near decimation, was especially apt.

This was a wide-ranging event which took appropriate note of the importance of education and the need to protect culture and heritage. Above all it was predicated on the need to make justice central to any kind of post conflict resolution.

It would not have been possible to organise this event without the support of our sponsors and of many wise individuals, led by Elder Holland. Their wisdom enriched our discussions.

Baroness Nicholson of Winterbourne

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Figure 1 HH Prince Tahseen Saeed Ali, Prince of the Yazidis, who graced the conference with his presence.



RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION: THE DRIVER FOR FORCED MIGRATION

Windsor Castle 10 to 14 September 2016

Narrative Summary

Introduction

This conference, convened by permission of Her Majesty The Queen in the uniquely historic surroundings of Windsor Castle in England, had two primary objectives: to find the triggers that have activated religious persecution down the ages, and which continue to do so, and to consider practical measures that will lead to the return to their homeland, and rehabilitation there, of the Yazidi people in northern Iraq, whose suffering today is on an epic scale.

The Conference was opened by Admiral Sir James Perowne, Governor and Constable of Windsor Castle, who welcomed the participants on behalf of The Queen. He spoke of Windsor's long tradition, stretching back to the English civil war in the mid seventeenth-century, of providing a setting for the resolution of complex political, ethical and moral situations. He hoped that the present occasion would continue that tradition. Baroness Nicholson of Winterbourne responded by describing how the Conference had come about and what its purposes were. The world had been shocked by the cruelty of extremist movements in many parts of the world, but none more so than in the ancient homeland of the Yazidi people, whose religion and culture deserves a global recognition they have never been accorded. She called for new plan along the lines of the Marshall plan after the Second World War, which would focus on the Yazidis but which be adaptable to other situations resulting from other conflicts and genocides.

To consider the issues and to propose practical solutions an invited group of over sixty well informed people gathered at Windsor over four days. They included faith group leaders, among them the spiritual head of the Yazidis, academics, practitioners from non-government organisations, British and Iraqi Government officials and international representatives. What follows is an account of their deliberations and their recommendations for immediate action.

Acts of Religious Persecution

Baroness Nicholson reminded the Conference that the resolution of all problems rooted in the victimisation of peoples must reside in justice. The ancient culture of the Yazidis had been degraded 72 times throughout history. Only an enforcement of the rule of law could save them from perpetual subjugation and even extinction.

Her appeal was echoed by Baroness Anelay of St John's, Minister of State at the United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office, who in a filmed statement spoke of the emotional trauma and lasting scars which all violence and upheaval, but especially sexual violence, wreaks on those who experience it. She emphasised the importance of fighting the stigma which so often results from sexual violence in conflicts, so that the victim not only suffers the immediate humiliation and pain of their ordeal but is left with a lasting sense of

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shame as though they had somehow been responsible for the abuse committed against them. She said that there could be no lasting peace and stability without respect for victims.

These was a theme picked up by His Highness The Prince of the Yazidis, spiritual head of the community, who was with the Conference throughout. He welcomed the hand of friendship which everyone present was extending and pleaded that the wider world should not forget the Yazidi people, as they often felt had been the case.

Friendship is critical. When you say you are my friend, we are friends until I die.
H.H.Prince Tahseen Saeed Ali, Prince of the Yazidis

The Prince's theme was echoed by the distinguished author and moral thinker Dr Theodore Zeldin, who spoke of desire of all peoples to be understood and appreciated. Part of the human condition is to express curiosity about others: without this there is little chance of according respect. The Yazidis had been the victims of intolerance because those perpetrating it had not tried to talk with them or understand them.

This need to ensure proper dialogue with everyone who suffers in conflicts, whether individuals or communities, was born out by the stories which ensued pertaining to past conflicts and to the resolution processes which in many cases had followed. Backed by specially commissioned research papers, which had been read by participants prior to the conference, histories were related at various points in the Conference concerning religious movements, in particular the Huguenots, the Jews and the Mormons, and whole nations, such as Germany, Rwanda and the United States of America.

In addressing these histories, the Reverend Ruth Scott, whose own experience was rooted in confronting divisions in Northern Ireland, spoke of the need to choose language carefully and precisely. It might, for example, be better to talk of 'conflict transformation' rather than to speak blandly of 'reconciliation'. Her view was that in the end every party involved in a conflict should be involved in its resolution, including the aggressor.

Ruth Scott identified five common drivers of religious persecution – inequality, indignity, ignorance, power and an identity under threat. All applied in their different ways in the histories outlined by Dr Richard Benda, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, Professor Paul Kerry and Rabbi Shlomo Farhi, and in the contextual papers written by Vesna Popovski. Indeed, a thread throughout the Conference was the similarities that occur in the situations that face victims of religious persecution across the ages, regardless of where they take place and whatever the apparent causes.

Dr Benda comes from Rwanda, scene of a genocidal policy in the 1990s which had defeated even the intervention of the United Nations. He posed the question 'How do you act morally and resist revenge when morality itself has been destroyed?' The answer had to be in the pre-eminence of the rule of law, with justice serving as a prerequisite of a desire for reconciliation. In Rwanda local judges had tried 400,000 people and held a million hearings. This had brought about a deep commitment to the goal of reconciliation. Those in any way practically involved in the restoration of Yazidi rights should have the same passion and determination.

My aspiration is to make reconciliation a new Jihad.' Dr. Richard Benda

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Elder Holland echoed this in outlining the experience of the Mormons in America in the nineteenth-century. Though he would not claim that their persecution had the same degree of utter callousness as that now faced by the Yazidis, there were similarities. Members of the Church of the Latter Day Saints had been misunderstood, persecuted, displaced and in some cases killed. Today was very different, with Mormons successfully integrated into the world community. It had happened because their sense of identity and strong faith had sustained them. Organised participation through a centralised church had led to engagement with civil society. Neighbourly assistance and relief efforts had aided the movement to safety of innumerable church members. Lastly, petitions for redress had been drawn up by non-Mormons, hired by church members to represent them – in other words, there had been a reaching out by the ‘victims’ towards other faiths and communities appealing for their help.

Rabbi Farhi gave acute and moving testimony of his own family history, with relatives murdered in the anti-Jewish *pogroms* of the 1930s and continuously abused and humiliated in different countries and circumstances. It was important to remember and honour these people, but it was also vital to accept that all conflicts not only create victims but they produce survivors, born in the midst of terrible destruction. We must all ensure that these young people have an identity separate from the trauma of their birth, and by means of recording their stories and placing them on social media we can strengthen this identity and share in it. Sometimes it is necessary to move on and not just hanker for what was possible in the past.

‘If you see yourself as a victim and seek eternal reparations and return to inaccessible lands, you will wallow in self-pity and never leave that place.’

Rabbi Shlomo Farhi

Rabbi Farhi’s determination that the stories of the past should be kept alive, but enhanced by new stories derived from experiences not only before and during conflict but in the forward-looking aftermath, was fully shared by Professor Eric Tuppeconnic. His very name, he pointed out, was a reference to his people’s history, as it derived from the Comanche word for ‘stone house’, actually the jail in which his ancestor had been placed at the end of the nineteenth century. Tuppeconnic spoke of how the Native American population had been reduced by 1900 to fewer than 300,000 as the result of being hunted, but in the space of one hundred years had risen back to nearly three million. His people’s was a story of determination to survive through the instruments of education and a willingness to compromise with the system of the coloniser in order to gain a platform for their rights and way of life.

The Yazidis

Much of the conference focused on the particular plight of the Yazidis, driven from their homeland in northern Iraq by systematic abuse, violation and extreme hostility. Dr Mamou Othman, an academic from the University of Duhok, explained that part of the tragedy of the Yazidi people came from the indifference of the world to their suffering brought about as much as anything by an absence of awareness that it was going on. The Prince of the Yazidis appealed to the Conference ‘to interfere as a moral lobby’. He expressed on behalf of his people and his faith his great desire that there should be an international effort to establish a Yazidi province with self-rule around the city of Sinjar.

Dr Ali Nasser Muthanna, Regional Manager of AMAR in Iraq, spoke of the importance of moving on from the blighted past to think of the future as a new era. Practical methods would need to be used to re-establish

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the Yazidi people. As part of this AMAR had identified a village close to Sinjar where a new health centre, school and community hall would be established to help Yazidis returning to their homeland.

‘The most important thing is to spread the feeling that they are owners of that land.’

Dr Ali Nasser Muthanna

Practical actions lay ahead not only in re-settlement projects such as building programmes and creating new governance in the Yazidi region, but also in raising international awareness of what Yazidi culture and religion actually are. It was a theme developed by Canon Dr Edmund Newell, Principal of Cumberland Lodge, Windsor, a charitable foundation of royal provenance dedicated to ethical discussion. Canon Newell said that there was far too much acquiescence internationally in the literally demonising view of the Yazidis as devil worshippers and that until this misunderstanding was corrected by a process of education the Yazidi people would always be treated in an unequal manner. It was therefore essential to involve Yazidis in larger inter-faith networks. Cumberland Lodge, one of the partner organisations in this Conference, was helping this process by convening a programme of discussions that would lead to a publication explaining the true values of the Yazidi religion. There was a recognition throughout the Conference that this religion had the right to be recognised as a world faith.

Though Da’esh were perpetrating some of the worst crimes against the Yazidis, there was valuable discussion at the Conference about whether there was a different kind of threat to their religion by third parties trying to make it more palatable to the people with whom it co-exists by stripping it of some of its distinctiveness. This would not be a profitable thing to do because it denied the Yazidi people their true inheritance. It was pointed out that other religious movements had been subject to the same reductiveness and it had usually compounded rather than resolved the tensions surrounding them.

‘The problem is not whether the Yazidis are monotheists or not. The problem is that they should be respected regardless.’

Dr. Peter Petkoff

There was a general desire by Conference participants to utilise the tools of domestic and international legal human rights to promote and, if necessary, to enforce acceptance of the status of Yazidi culture and religion.

Religious Persecution: Prevention and Intervention

Sir Malcolm Evans, Chair of the United Nations Sub-Committee for the Prevention of Torture, believed that it was impossible to remove religious persecution altogether. The Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of Derby shared the view that persecution could never be totally eradicated, but he believed that much progress could be made if we are prepared to invoke the spiritual side of human nature. Much so-called religious persecution, he believed, was not religiously based at all but ‘in defence of our bloc’.

Baroness Nicholson spoke of patterns of behaviour that precede religious persecution. If these could be identified then there was more probability of prevention. These warning signs would as likely be economic or cultural as religious. Her belief was that ‘the more common denominators we discover, the more advantage we have to divert these crimes’.

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There was consensus at the Conference that there is a need to establish monitoring mechanisms to detect imminent acts of persecution. These would need to be both local and international. In particular – a point elaborated by Mariela Neagu, who had written an informative background paper on the rights of children, drawing especially from the Romanian experience – it was vital to increase international protections for internally displaced children, since they were often the most vulnerable victims of persecution.

'If children grow up in a culture of tolerance our future will be brighter.'

Dr. Hussein Nayyaf

There was much conviction that the rule of law was essential for remedying the consequences of religious persecution. Chief Justice Kauger's background paper for the Conference showed a model of success for the implementation of a programme of justice for victims. Dr Barbara Harrell-Bond's long experience of working with refugees had assured her that the provision of legal aid to internally displaced persons, refugees and migrants is essential if they are to be allowed to present their testimonies and make their case for reparations. Partly, too, there is a need for awareness training of lawyers and all those involved in legal processes. As the Bishop of Derby pointed out, this was not something unique to conflict zones. The government of the United Kingdom was intending to train judiciaries to understand better how sexuality can be used by aggressors as a powerful weapon to destroy identity. Given the scale of sexual abuse of abducted Yazidis, it was obvious that the same systems of training would be needed for the judiciaries assisting their rehabilitation.

Throughout the Conference there was a strong recognition that culture was not only a means of asserting the sense of self-worth in all human beings, but could be an instrument of reclamation. Professor Michael Bochmann's presentation on the importance of music as an expression of ourselves played a key part in this. The Yazidis have a particular veneration of music – and it was one of the delights of the Conference that an opportunity was provided to hear a distinguished Yazidi singer perform.

Justice for Victims of Conflict

With contributions from the distinguished human rights lawyer Baroness Kennedy, from Sharon Eubank, Director of LDS Charities, and from lawyers such as Damon Parker, a trustee of AMAR, it was agreed that there needed to be immediate practical actions. A programme of stabilisation and recovery must always follow conflict. LDS Charities had such a programme in hand in northern Iraq, but it would require a massive international determination to be comprehensive. In the particular case of the Yazidis AMAR would be standing by to assist with all aspects of resettlement, a process which must include resolution of land ownership, transitional justice initiatives, women's empowerment, protection of cultural heritage and job creation.

'It is the right of the Yazidi people to practice their ancient faith in peace. Many Yazidis wish to return to the Sinjar region and to their religious centre in Lalish, but only if their life can be secure.'

Hazem Tahseen Saeed, Deputy to the Prince of the Yazidis

Figure 2 Sir Malcolm Evans and Elder Jeffery Holland discussing the achievability of preventing religious discrimination.



RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE AMAR WINDSOR CONFERENCE 2016

Acts of Religious Persecution

The conference:

- **Calling** on the United Nations and its funding partners to recognise that religion and its accompanying varied cultural frameworks guide in some measure the thoughts and actions of most of humanity.
- **Noting** with sorrow the hostile actions which all too frequently arise from religious disputes, accepts that these are a principal reason for forced migration, and calls for this to be addressed within and alongside humanitarian and other crisis responses.
- **Accepting** too, that the root cause of the Yazidi trauma is an ancient theological dispute, from which springs the crimes of Da'esh;

Demands long-overdue recognition by all faiths and each nation of the Yazidi religion with its associated culture, according to the articles of the Westminster Declaration of 12 My 2016, by which all parties are fully committed to:

- a. **Lifting** up in joy and partnership the Yazidi faith to bring universal recognition and acceptance of this ancient and noble way of worship;
- b. **Ensuring** that the highest respect and honour is accorded to the Yazidi religion, in the knowledge that it has an assured place in the historic pantheon of great religions whose hallmarks are the teaching and practice of tolerance;
- c. **Restoring** to the Yazidi people in full health and dignity their ancient religion, music, culture, habitations and ways of life.

And **requests** through the good offices of the Federal Republic of Iraq the immediate inclusion of the Yazidi culture as an integral part of the UN Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Forced Migration

The conference:

- **Calling** on the United Nations, governments and parliaments to address the gap between the rhetoric of International Aid, and its reality whereby the torrent of financial contributions from generous populations are blocked by a succession of dams as they flow through various systems, resulting in a trickle reaching the target victims.
- **Accepting** the grim realities and hopelessness arising from the promises undelivered to the world's 60 million refugees and unnumbered IDPs globally whose plight arises from forced migration.

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- **Accepting** too that almost all victims of forced migration seek a return home that the average length of stay in a refugee camp is now 11 years, and the stay of squatters is 24 years.
- **Recognizing** that the prevalence of sexual violence in conflict means that it is critical that it remains at the forefront of the international political agenda and is fully recognised as a crime against humanity at the international level.

Demands that governments and donor institutions:

- a. **Refocus** their endeavors on swiftly and effectively assisting the return home of the encamped victims of forced migration through rebuilding essential services, restitution of lands and provision of appropriate security.
- b. **Ensure**, where a quick return may not be possible in all cases, provision within the camps of health, education, water, sanitation and cultural, artistic, sporting, worship and occupational opportunities, including the hiring if IDPs for a majority of camp jobs.

And **calls** on the United Nations to:

- a. **Establish** a global conference on preventing sexual violence in conflict, to meet every four years, working with all concerned parties to ensure that the relevant UN conventions are implemented fully;
- b. **Ensure** sexual and gender-based violence is on the agenda of the Commission on the Status of Women, and the Committee on the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women.
- c. **Ensure** that in peacekeeping initiatives women have right to 30% representation on negotiating bodies.

The Yazidi Situation

The conference **calls** upon all governments, international and local institution and individuals to:

- **Accept** the Yazidi cry for help as a highest priority with its concomitant risk of extermination, and act to ensure the survival and regeneration of its ancient faith and honourable and hard-working people;
- **Create** identifiable audit chains and full financial accountability to deliver 90% of donor funds for Yazidi villages to rebuild, equip and staff essential services, in line with AMAR and LDS Charity models of development and inter-faith community cooperation by rebuilding an operating a health centre, school and village hall.
- **Partner** the federal and regional governments of Iraq in their time of extreme military, civil and economic challenge to:
 - a. **Examine** and strengthen all laws relating to the recognition of minority religions including Christians, Yazidis, Mandeans, Shabaks, Turkmen and other minority groups;
 - b. **Replicate** and expand programming based on the current AMAR Combating Religious Discriminations project into a national program across Iraq which would conduct education at two levels

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- i. The General Public – Education about all religions, human rights, women’s rights and democracy with the aim of accepting each other on the basis of shared principles;
 - ii. Interfaith dialogue – work to gain support for Yazidis as a global beneficent faith by involving them within major interfaith networks promoting interaction and understanding between all sects, parties and groups, looking beyond mutual tolerance to long term friendship.
- c. **Provide** timely justice, compensation, support and land restoration for the Yazidi victims of the crisis to help them rebuild their families and communities.

Address the vulnerability of Child IDPs

The conference demands that the United Nations:

- a. Adopts an optional protocol on internally displaced children; thus allowing internally displaced children the same level of protection under international law accorded to refugees;
- b. Creates a mechanism for the registration of internally displaced children as soon as they reach official camps to preserve their identity, prevent their further abuse through rape, trafficking and force marriage and to reunify them with their families which form the heart of child protection mechanisms through the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child;
- c. Provides for all children encamped , with no distinction and without delay, basic health and full education at all levels, disregarding age, gender, family situation or duration of the child’s stay;
- d. Provides significant additional protection, support and training for the many thousands of sexually abused women and girls in the Yazidi situation in the knowledge that once abused, the victims are prime candidates to be abused again.

CONFERENCE PARTNERS



Cumberland Lodge

exchanging views, inspiring minds

Baroness Anelay of St. Johns.....	Minister for Human Rights, UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office
H.H. Tahseen Saeed Ali.....	Prince of the Yazidis
Elder Jeffrey R. Holland.....	Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, LDS Church
Dr. Alastair Redfern.....	The Rt. Revd. the Lord Bishop of Derby
Canon Dr Edmund Newell.....	Principal Cumberland Lodge

CONFERENCE COORDINATORS

Dr. Theodore Zeldin.....	Conference President
Baroness Nicholson of Winterbourne	Conference Chairman
Dr. Alastair Niven.....	Chair for the Academic Conference Group
Richard Crow.....	Conference Administrator
Christopher Straub.....	Lead Rapporteur
Christopher Kyriacou.....	Rapporteur
Robert Dolan.....	Rapporteur

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Katie Welsford.....	Communications Officer, AMAR
Karen Willmott.....	Baroness Nicholson's Personal Assistant

CONFERENCE SPEAKERS

Dr. Richard M. Benda	Research Fellow, Luther King House College, University of Manchester
Prof. Michael Bochmann.....	Professor, Trinitylaban Conservatoire of Music and Dance
Robert Cole.....	AMAR Head of Communications
Richard Crow.....	AMAR Chief Executive
W. Cole Durham Jr.....	Founding Director, International Center for Law and Religion Studies, Brigham Young University
Sharon Eubank.....	Director, LDS Charities
Professor Sir Malcolm Evans.....	Chair, of the United Nations Subcommittee for the Prevention of Torture
Rabbi Shlomo Farhi.....	Director, Chazak
Dr. Barbara Harrell-Bond.....	Emerata Professor and Associate, University of Oxford
Elder Patrick Kearon.....	General Authority Seventy, LDS Church
Baroness Helena Kennedy.....	Principal, Mansfield College, University of Oxford of The Shaw Q.C.
Professor Paul Kerry.....	Associate Dean of Undergraduate Education, Brigham Young University
Dr. David Kirkham.....	Academic Director and Professor, Brigham Young University London Centre
Dr. Ali Nasser Muthanna.....	Regional Manager in Iraq, AMAR
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Mariel Neagu.....	Child's Rights Expert, Asociatia Children's High Level Group
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Damon Parker.....	Trustee, AMAR
Admiral Sir James Perowne	Constable and Governor, Windsor Castle
Dr. Peter Petkoff.....	Law Lecturer, Brunel Law School
Dr. Vesna Popovski.....	Researcher on Eastern Europe and CIS
Hazem Tahseen Saeed.....	Deputy to the Yazidi Prince
Rev. Ruth Scott.....	Facilitator, Media and Broadcaster
Eric Tippeconic.....	Professor of History, California State University Fullerton
Craig Whittaker MP.....	UK Member of Parliament

Figure 3 Elder and Sister Holland with the Rt Revd Lord Bishop of Derby, and Baroness Nicholson of Winterbourne, in the Vicar's Hall of St George's, Windsor Castle.

