

# The Yazidi Genocide

# Overview



Hi, We're a group of students and we work in our spare time to raise awareness of the Holocaust and other genocides. Recently we conducted a survey of our classmates and we discovered that not a single one had heard of the genocide of the Yazidi. Hopefully, over the next few minutes this lesson will help you understand more about the Yazidi people and the terrible atrocities that were committed against them.

# About the lesson

- In early August 2014 the so-called 'Islamic State' attacked the Yazidi people.
- It is important to understand what happened to the Yazidi men, women and children who suffered
- We hope that this lesson will help you understand why the event of 2014 were defined as a genocide and what the impact on innocent Yazidi people was.

# Key terms for this lesson

- **Genocide** The intention to destroy a group of people defined by their ethnicity, religion or nationality
- **ISIS** A group of extremists who sought to annihilate the Yazidi people
- **Kocho** A village near Mount Sinjar where Yazidi families lived in 2014.
- **Mount Sinjar** The Yazidi's sacred mountain where thousands fled in August 2014
- **Yazidi** The men, women and children who follow the ancient Yazidi religious tradition in northern Iraq

# What happened in August 2014?

- In the early morning of 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2014 gunmen from ISIS attacked Yazidis in northern Iraq.
- ISIS had decided that Yazidis should not live in their new 'caliphate'
- Over the course of the next hours and days the undefended Yazidi civilian villages around Mount Sinjar were attacked
- Some families were able to flee to Kurdish controlled areas, others ran to the upper slopes of Mount Sinjar where ISIS besieged them...thousands more were trapped by ISIS

# What happened in Kocho in 2014?

- On 3 August villagers in Kocho were woken by gunfire as ISIS advanced. Those who had cars fled to Mount Sinjar
- When ISIS arrived they told the 1200 Yazidis to assemble in the village school: women and younger children were forced upstairs, men and older boys were kept on the ground floor
- The men and older boys were forced out of the school at gunpoint and into trucks. They were executed nearby.
- Older women deemed to be above childbearing age were also executed
- Unmarried women and older girls were taken by ISIS fighters
- Younger boys were also taken away, given Muslim names and forced to be child soldiers.
- **This pattern was repeated in hundreds of places around Sinjar**

# What happened to Layla?

- When ISIS attacked the Yazidi on 3 August Layla and her family tried to escape to the top of Mount Sinjar but were captured
- Layla does not know what happened to her husband
- Along with her young children she was forced to become a slave by ISIS
- Over the next three years Layla was traded nine times amongst ISIS fighters
- **It is estimated that 7,000 Yazidi women and girls were enslaved by ISIS. 3,000 are still missing.**



# What happened to Bahar?

- Bahar and her whole family were captured by ISIS.
- Her family was separated after they were abducted
- The young women were taken to Syria
- ISIS attempted to force Bahar to reject her religion
- **Like thousands of other Yazidi Bahar still has no news about the fate of most of her family**



# End of lesson knowledge check

Question 1 Why did ISIS attack the Yazidi?

- A. ISIS wanted to destroy the Yazidi people because of their religious beliefs
- B. ISIS attacked the Yazidi to secure the oil that could be found in the area
- C. ISIS launched their attack in order to increase their chances of capturing more of Iraq
- D. ISIS wanted to capture Mount Sinjar as it was strategically important

# End of lesson knowledge check

Question 2 When and where did ISIS attack Yazidis?

- A. August 13 2009, around Mount Sinjar in northern Iraq
- B. August 3 2019, around Mount Sinjar in northern Iran
- C. August 3 2014, around Mount Sinjar in northern Iraq
- D. August 13 2009, around Mount Sinjar in northern Syria

# End of lesson knowledge check

Question 3 How did ISIS treat those Yazidi they captured?

- A. Families were separated
- B. Young women were kidnapped, sold into slavery and subject of sexual violence
- C. Men and older boys were executed by ISIS
- D. Younger boys were abducted, radicalised and trained to be child soldiers
- E. All of the above

# End of lesson knowledge check

Question 4 What has been the outcome of the trials of ISIS leaders?

- A. ISIS leaders have been caught, convicted and put in prison
- B. There have not been any trials yet.

# End of lesson knowledge check

## Answers

1. A

2. C

3. E

4. B

# Thank you

Thank you for learning about the Yazidi people. It is important that they are not forgotten about.

We'd also like to thank Ryan D'Souza and Kirsten Greenaway for all their help in putting together this resource.