

Yazidi Genocide Memorial Opens at “Grave of Mothers” in Solagh, Sinjar

PRESS KIT FOR INAUGURATION EVENT

October 18, 2023

A common space to remember and grieve, this memorial will immortalize the lives lost in the Yazidi Genocide of 2014.

ABOUT THE EVENT

When: 18 October, 2023 at 11:00 -13:30

Where: Solagh Village, Sinjar, Iraq (36.3085744, 41.9051522)

Hosted by the International Organization for Migration in Iraq (IOM) and Nadia’s Initiative, the inaugural event will mark the opening of a grand memorial site honoring and remembering the Yazidi lives lost at the hands of ISIL.

Located near the “Grave of Mothers”, where many older Yazidi women were martyred in 2014, the event will host speeches by representatives of IOM and Nadia’s Initiative, joined by diplomatic representatives, UN agencies, local and international NGOs and the local community.

Attendees from the press will have opportunity to interview spokespersons from IOM and Nadia’s Initiative in English, Kurdish or Arabic as well as representatives from the local community before the event.

TO RSVP TO THE EVENT AND FOR GENERAL PRESS INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

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NOTES ON LOGISTICS

The Yazidi Genocide Memorial site is located at the entrance of Sinjar from Telafer road site (left side), 200m away from the main road. On the main road, there are two signs near the entrance.



GPS coordinates of the site: 36.3086452, 41.9052066

GPS coordinates of the entrance from the main road: 36.3152321, 41.9051858



Satellite image this picture highlights the site, and it shows Sinjar, Talafer road (47).

Security

The event security is being coordinated with the central and local authorities of the Iraqi government. In addition to the secured area, we will ensure several layers of security at the entrance of the event (memorial side).



Event site map and media enclave locations

Arrival

10:15 – 10:45 a.m. The ceremony will start at 11:00 a.m.

End of the ceremony

The ceremony will end at 13:30, however, the site will remain open till 15:00.

Translation

Live translation Arabic - English and Kurdish – English translation will be available (live).

ABOUT THE MEMORIAL

Supported by U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and with funds from Nadia Murad's Nobel Peace Prize, awarded for her advocacy to end the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war and armed conflict, this memorial project was built by the International Organization for Migration in Iraq (IOM) over the last two years at the request of Yazidi survivors. It is built at the location where ISIL killed and buried more than 90 women in a mass grave.

The Yazidi Genocide Memorial transforms a place of tragedy into a space of peace and remembrance. It aims to provide closure and healing for families who were never reunited with the bodies of their loved ones lost to the genocide, and offers one form of justice, which minority communities in Iraq desperately deserve. This monument stands as a reminder to the global community of the depth humanity can sink to and highlight the challenges faced by the Yazidi community as they rebuild their lives after the genocide.

This memorial will serve as an educational tool for the world to remember the Yazidi genocide and prevent such atrocities from ever happening again to anyone else. Additionally, it will serve as a place to bring our community together to remember and honor the women, men, and children we lost during this tragic event.

- **Nadia Murad**, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, UNODC Goodwill Ambassador and President and founder of Nadia's Initiative.

The memorial site welcomes guests with a wall comprising of 73 sun sculptures, which represent the 73 events of persecution inflicted upon Yazidis and recorded in their oral history. Rings of stone walkways wrap around the 10,000 m² space symbolizing infinity and the interconnected lives in the Yazidi community. Nearly 3,000 unmarked headstones run along the walkways in honour of the more than 3,000 killed in Sinjar in the 2014 genocide.

In the centre lies an Olympic-sized pool that was the beginning of what was to be a community recreational centre. After ISIL's insurgency in Sinjar, more than 90 older Yazidi women were found dead inside the empty concrete pool. Now referred to as the "Grave of Mothers", it remains completely intact and has been preserved with a tempered glass cover.

Overlooking the "Grave of Mothers" is a monument of 25 concrete columns starting from 1 m to 10 m creating a mountainous shape that symbolizes the holy Mount Sinjar. The tallest column showcases the sun, one of the holiest symbols in Yazidism, that represents birth and life. Across the columns are 25 sculptures of various Yazidi community members in motion, replicating real photos of people fleeing to safety in 2014.

The memorial site additionally hosts two grand halls, washrooms, greenspaces and is fully powered by solar panels to provide 24-hour electricity.

The memorial was designed by Yazidi architect Dersim Khairy Namo, using 3D imagery and is her gift to the community. Namo and IOM engineers met with the community, government leaders and local artists in Sinjar to incorporate their inputs, redesigning as necessary in a collective effort.

[WATCH: Yazidi architect Dersim Khairy Namo explains the symbolism behind her design of the Yazidi Genocide Memorial.](#)

"Remembrance is the foundation of peace. As we inaugurate this memorial site, we reiterate our support to the community to build a brighter future. Whether it is to safely return to their ancestral lands or to build a new life in a new location, IOM stands in solidarity with the Yazidi community and will continue to support national authorities to realize this vision".

The memorial planning and construction were implemented by IOM, whose staff and engineers conducted numerous surveys of the land and discussions with community leaders and government officials to ensure the final monument meets local needs and causes minimal disruption to daily life. IOM staff conducted regular visits to the site to monitor construction progress facilitated by a local construction company.

The site took roughly eight months to construct, employing more than 60 workers from Sinjar. All materials were locally sourced, with most natural stone coming from Mount Sinjar.

Before the construction, IOM legal team worked with the landowner and local ministries to secure the proper legal documents, such as inheritance certificates and sponsorship letters, to ensure a legitimate title transfer to Nadia's Initiative, who purchased and donated the land using funds from founder and president Nadia Murad's Nobel Peace Prize.

ABOUT NADIA'S INITIATIVE

Nadia's Initiative is an international NGO dedicated to rebuilding communities in crisis and advocating globally for survivors of sexual violence. Its current work is focused on the sustainable redevelopment of the Yazidi homeland in Sinjar, Iraq. Nadia's Initiative works with the local community and a variety of implementing partners on the ground in Sinjar to design and support projects that promote the restoration of education, healthcare, livelihoods, WASH (water, sanitation, and hygiene), culture, and women's empowerment in the region. All Nadia's Initiative programs are community-driven, survivor centric, and work to promote long term peacebuilding. Nadia's Initiative advocates governments and international organizations to support efforts to rebuild Sinjar, seek justice for Yazidis, improve security in the region, and support survivors of sexual violence worldwide.

Learn more here: [Nadia's Initiative \(nadiasinitiative.org\)](https://nadiasinitiative.org)

ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRATION

IOM is the leading intergovernmental organization in the field of migration and works closely with governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental partners to support orderly and humane migration management, promote international cooperation on migration issues and respond to the humanitarian and development needs of mobile populations, including refugees and internally displaced persons. IOM is part of the United Nations system, as a related organization.

With over 1,700 staff members and offices in Baghdad, Erbil, Basra and Mosul, IOM Iraq works in cooperation with the Government of Iraq, the Kurdistan Regional Government, civil society organizations and international partners to provide support across the country's 18 governorates, operating a multi-sectoral response covering shelter and infrastructure rehabilitation, health care, mental health and psychosocial support services, social cohesion, livelihood assistance, protection, support for transitional justice efforts, national migration policy development and more.

Learn more here: [IOM Iraq](#)

NOTE FOR MEDIA

The Yazidi Genocide Memorial site is place for remembrance and mourning. Visitors and attendees from the community are still grieving the loss of their loved ones and may be overwhelmed during the opening ceremony.

We request your compassion and empathy when entering this space, and to approach this subject with due consideration to the hardships and emotional turmoil suffered by the community.

A media enclave will be set up for video and photography of the speakers at the event. Kindly restrict movement during the speeches and avoid the use of flash photography.

For interviews with members of the community, please refer to the guidance provided by the [Murad Code](#) and secure informed consent from each individual on camera. In the event consent is withdrawn by an individual, you are obliged to end the interview and erase all content collected linked to that individual.

Teams from both IOM and Nadia's Initiative will be present on the ground to support you.

To receive more information and to be added to the mailing list, please write to iraqpublicinfo@iom.int

MULTIMEDIA

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[Link to photos](#)