



Free Yezidi Foundation Statement

Death of ISIS Leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi

The Free Yezidi Foundation applauds the special forces who carried out the raid on ISIS leader and founder, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. Baghdadi led and inspired genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and countless atrocities. In addition, in a personal capacity, he was also a rapist.

There is no doubt that the death of Baghdadi will constitute a major defeat to ISIS. ISIS has existed and expanded not only because of support of thousands of enthusiastic members on the ground, but also through propaganda and savvy social media efforts to portray an image of success. The death of Baghdadi and the defeat of the so-called Caliphate challenges their attempts to claim the terrorist and genocidal organization is successful. However, it is important to remember that even though Baghdadi is dead, it would be a dangerous and historic mistake to consider the ISIS organization, its ideology, or the tens of thousands of ISIS male and female members, supporters, detained fighters, and sleeper cells no longer a threat. Complacency is not a good option. We cannot allow an ISIS 2.0.

The security situation in Syria and Iraq, especially for religious minorities like Yezidis and Christians, remains precarious. The threat of terrorism and Islamic extremism remains high and continues to pose an existential threat to our people, living with the very real threat that ISIS might re-surge and target minorities again. The strongest force combatting ISIS in Syria has been the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in coordination with American and coalition allies. Conversely, ISIS has received financial and logistic supporter from a number of actors. In Northeast Syria, a moderate, multi-ethnic society tolerant of religious minorities has been attacked by Islamist extremists, including members of ISIS who previously took orders from Baghdadi, now armed and funded by Turkey. This is an ominous sign for the future. Those terrorists must face trial, not return to the battlefield in Syria.

The Free Yezidi Foundation would have very much preferred Baghdadi to have been captured alive. He should have had to answer for his crimes and crimes that he ordered and inspired in a courtroom, particularly the most heinous crimes perpetrated against Yezidis. However, in such a kinetic raid, capture of such a suspect alive is extremely difficult to accomplish. The Free Yezidi Foundation is grateful to those American soldiers and intelligence officers who have pursued ISIS terrorists for the last five years, and to the SDF for providing intelligence for this success. We would like to thank all those who were involved in researching, coordinating, and carrying out this successful raid.

ISIS is not just a terror organization. It was a quasi-state that prepared and carried out genocide, mass atrocities, and mass rape in a systematic manner. No raid or trial could ever erase the trauma of what happened to our people: the murders, the rapes, the experience of our women literally bought and sold on slave markets. The horrific memories remain. One day, some of the perpetrators will be exposed and sentences through indictments and real trials. At a minimum, the Yezidi community can see that Baghdadi's vision of an Islamist-dominant society in which religious minorities face death and slavery did not last. The international community must now press on to eliminate the ISIS ideology permanently.

The Free Yezidi Foundation wishes solace and a brighter future to the families of those who have died at the hands of ISIS. To those families in Iraq and Syria, in France, England, Germany, Belgium, and the United States: it is a better world now that Baghdadi's voice is gone. FYF will continue to compose case files on ISIS perpetrators and continue to provide trauma support to survivors. Mostly, we wish all the survivors of ISIS horrors a pathway to recovery.

For media inquiries or questions, write to info@freeyezidi.org

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