

Communal Tragedy, Suffering and Loss; Observations on Trauma and Resettlement  
among Yazidi families in Canada

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In August 2014, over 4000 Yazidi men, women and children were killed in the Sinjar district of northern Iraq. Another 20,000 were captured, sold for sex, forced to convert religion, and join Daesh. Another 200,000 Yazidi were left homeless. It has been classified as a genocide by the United Nations. In 2017, Canada quietly resettled over 9000 Yazidi survivors. They relocated mostly to Calgary, London, Toronto and Winnipeg where small numbers of their community had previously resettled. Most of those resettled were fractured family units, mainly women and children, owing to the fact that a large number of the men and teenage boys had been captured or killed by Daesh. This presentation examines some of the unique resettlement challenges these women and children experienced using 35 qualitative interviews conducted in four cities in March 2017. Given that this group has experienced extreme trauma and that their flight to Canada was directly from Iraq, has meant a different set of challenges for the settlement services provided to this group ranging from unique housing and language training needs to very specialized therapies to help them overcome their trauma. Observations of their pre-arrival and post-resettlement experiences has meant that academics, governments and settlement agencies must rethink the way they do their work and challenge the strategies we use to assist refugees to become fully functioning citizens of Canada.