



JEWISH COMMUNITY RELATIONS COUNCIL
of San Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin, Sonoma, Alameda and Contra Costa Counties

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SPEAKING OUT IN SUPPORT OF THE YEZIDIS

Statement by Rabbi Doug Kahn, Executive Director, Jewish Community Relations Council

Tomorrow is Holocaust Remembrance Day. We will mourn the loss of six million Jews who were brutally murdered – two-thirds of the Jewish population of Europe – along with millions of others. We will also note that with the passing of 70 years since liberation, that memories fade and the scourge of anti-Semitism is once again rearing its ugly head in Europe and beyond.

It is because of the importance of memory, of learning from the lessons of the past, that we must continue to speak out about the most vicious, cynical and deadly human rights abuses – past and present, especially genocide and the threat of genocide.

This includes acknowledging the Armenian Genocide, the 100th anniversary of which is about to be observed and it also includes the Yezidis, nearly 600,000 of whom have been living in Northern Iraq. Little known but long targeted, their community mourns the loss of some 23 million people murdered and forced to convert over the course of 700 years, including at the hands of the Ottoman Empire and most recently under Saddam Hussein's forces. Tragically, the Yezidi community now lives under precarious threat from ISIS.

The Yezidis are a little known community, and it is all too easy to forget, to turn the page, to move on. But today we pause, on the eve of Holocaust Remembrance Day, to reaffirm the importance of memory and of action. The United Nations, the nations of the world, have a moral responsibility to take the steps necessary to stem the tide of the latest attempt at the eradication of the Yezidis, including providing humanitarian aid, protecting refugees, negotiating the release of Yezidi and other sex slaves, securing the release of kidnapped men, women and children, opening schools, and resettling displaced Yezidis and other minorities.

We remember the victims of the Holocaust and we honor their memory in part by vowing not to be silent.

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