



PRESS RELEASE

Yazda Supports Opening of Sharaf al-Din Shrine Mass Grave and Calls for Timely Identification of Victims

Iraq: On 20 August 2026, Yazda joined Yazidi organizations in a key meeting organized by the International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP) in Duhok, focused on establishing a joint mechanism to open and exhume the mass grave at the Sharaf al-Din Shrine in the Al-Shimal subdistrict (Sinuni), northern Sinjar. The site holds the remains of victims from the Khanasor and Bardiya mass graves.

The meeting was attended by families of the victims as well as the Iraqi government, including the Mass Graves and Missing Persons Protection Directorate at the Martyrs Foundation and the Directorate of Forensic Medicine at the Ministry of Health. Representatives from the Kurdistan Regional Government's Directorate of Forensic Medicine, the Criminal Evidence Department at the Ministry of Interior, and the Commission of Investigation and Evidence Gathering also attended.

The Iraqi federal government and the Kurdistan Regional Government will continue to coordinate closely on this process, including by cross-referencing available information and consolidating data on the two mass graves in a dedicated database at the Directorate of Forensic Medicine in Baghdad. These efforts are intended to facilitate the DNA matching process and support the identification of the victims.

On 21 August 2026, national technical teams from the Mass Graves and Missing Persons Protection Directorate and the Directorate of Forensic Medicine, in partnership with ICMP, began a field mission at the site to conduct an initial technical assessment and [prepare for the next stages of the survey](#). This work is [being carried out](#) in preparation for the official opening of the mass grave on 19 September 2026. Following the exhumation, the remains will be transferred, in accordance with official procedures, to forensic medicine laboratories in Baghdad for DNA analysis and matching.

Yazda will continue to support the families and national technical teams throughout this humanitarian mission and will closely follow the identification and DNA matching process in the stages ahead. Yazda also calls on all relevant authorities to prioritize this process and ensure that the necessary resources, coordination, and technical support are in place to bring it to a timely conclusion. More than 12 years after the genocide, families have waited far too long for answers about the fate of their loved ones and for the opportunity to lay them to rest with dignity. Completing the exhumation, identification, and return of the remains should therefore be treated as a matter of urgency and as an essential step toward providing families with truth, dignity, and closure.



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For media inquiries, please contact:

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About Yazda:

Yazda is a non-governmental, non-profit organization that was established in 2014 in response to the genocide committed by the self-declared Islamic State (ISIS) against the Yazidis and other minorities in Iraq. Yazda manages a portfolio of humanitarian, justice, advocacy, and development-related projects, all of which are community and survivor-centered in terms of design and implementation. Since its inception, Yazda has been working with local and international partners to provide humanitarian, accountability, and advocacy services to vulnerable minority groups in Iraq in their post-genocide recovery. The organization has been operating in Iraq since October 2014 and has main offices in Duhok in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and a branch office in Sinjar in Nineveh Province. Yazda is registered as a non-profit organization in the United States, the United Kingdom, Iraq, Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Over the past 8 years, Yazda has grown to employ around 80 staff on average, received support from numerous donors, both institutional and individual, and has reached tens of thousands of direct and indirect beneficiaries through its programs and initiatives.