

Statement to the Standing Committee on Immigration and Citizenship

Gary Rose
Director of Communications
Project Abraham
Mozuud RSVP

December 5, 2017

The Government of Canada has proudly done the right thing. It has recognized that Canada has a moral obligation to protect the Yazidis from the existential threat of genocide, and has responded by committing to relocate women and children survivors of ISIS to Canada. While its execution of the relocation has not been without problems, its moral intent needs to be congratulated.

Still, Canada, as a signee to the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, must continue to do more for the Yazidis. It is an obligation that must not end with the current initiative since it is not only fundamental to the role Canada has taken in the world as a peace keeper, and a nation that respects the rights of all peoples to live in freedom, it is also our duty by international agreement. We cannot claim the moral high ground by limiting sanctuary for a people who have experienced genocide. We must, as a moral nation, do our fullest to uphold our commitment and continue to help the survivors.

So it was with great pain, as a Canadian, and as a Jew, who knows only too well about genocide, that the representative of the UNHCR speaking before this committee refused to acknowledge the obligation of the UN regarding the Yazidi genocide. It was with great pain that I heard from his lips that the UNHCR is ignoring its mandate, as required by the 1948 Geneva Convention, by having a stated policy that disregards and contradicts the policy of the Government of Canada's on the genocide of the Yazidis. And it was even more astonishing to hear it, given that a survivor of the Yazidi genocide, Nadia Murad, is a UN Goodwill Ambassador and spokesperson who is demanding justice for her people.

Given this flagrant disregard, I urge the Government of Canada out of respect for its moral leadership, to continue the Canadian initiative to help the Yazidis, who are still facing an existential crisis, by following the US government's lead to no longer fund the UNHCR, and commit to work directly through its own agencies and NGOs on the ground in Iraq to resettle Yazidis refugees who need sanctuary.