

CREID INTERSECTIONS SERIES **Religious Inequalities and Gender**

Discrimination and Conflict: Experiences of Yazidi Women and Men within their Community and Iraqi Society

Zeri Khairy Gedi

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Zeri Khairy Gedi

Summary

This research sets out to identify problems facing the Yazidi community in Iraq, to uncover the challenges in the areas inhabited by the Yazidis, and to find out if they have been discriminated against because of their religion, customs and traditions. Specifically, this research focuses on revealing the marginalisation that Yazidi women experience both within the Yazidi community and from wider Iraqi society because of their identity as a Yazidi and as a woman.

Keywords: women, marginalisation, Yazidi, religious minority, Iraq, participatory research

Zeri Khairy Gedi is a Yazidi civil activist from Bashiqa. She trained at the College of Geology and the University of Duhok and is currently working as an accountant. Zeri has been working with civil society organisations for six years, and was one of the founders of the voluntary Olive Grove Campaign, established after the liberation of Bashiqa from ISIS. The Olive Grove Campaign sought to bring life back to the area, painting walls with phrases aimed at promoting peace and love. Zeri has also worked with Yezidis International, the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) at the University of Sussex, and the Olive Branch Organisation. Previously, Zeri was a project coordinator promoting the participation of minority youth in society. This expertise, combined with her own lived experience, means that Zeri has a unique understanding of the challenges faced by Yazidi communities in Bashiqa and Bahzani, and particular insight into the unique experiences of Yazidi women.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background to the Yazidi people of Iraq

When it comes to understanding the Yazidi people, we must first talk about the beautiful towns in which they live, Bashiqa and Bahzani. They are also known by the name 'The City of Olives', due to the abundance of olive groves. It was previously said that these towns were also famous for their orchards of pistachios and hazelnuts, and that they had springs of running water to irrigate the land and orchards. Bashiqa is also famous for the heritage dam of Sheikh Hassan, which was built around 3,000 years ago. At the time, it was a dam with running water. It is now a shrine to Sheikh Hassan and has become a place for people to gather and hold Yazidi celebrations.

Bashiqa is also renowned for local industries that existed in the past, such as tahini (sesame paste), soap, olive oil production, and other products, which have now been discontinued. Bashiqa was also once known for the weaving of local carpets and traditional clothes, and for the manufacture of *arak* (alcoholic drinks).

These towns are home to many religions. There are Muslims and Christians, including Shabak and Turkmen people. Some of these, such as the Shabak and Turkmen, are also ethnically distinct. One of these is the Yazidi component. The Yazidi religion is one of the ancient *Shamsaniya* (sun) religions in the Middle East. The word *Shamsaniya* originated from the word *shams*, which means 'sun', as in 'sun worship'. Most Yazidi rituals depend on sunset and sunrise. Yazidis are now a monotheistic religious minority in their own right, and the Yazidi component represents 90 per cent of this community. These towns

have a population of about 35,000 people. They are located 12-15 kilometres northeast of the city of Mosul. The north is bordered by a mountain range called Jabal Bashiqa, and there are around 60 villages belonging to the centre of this district.

In these towns, the community consists of several religiously and ethnically distinct groups, and each group has its own language. The language spoken by the people of the region is Arabic, but in the Bashiqi or Bahzan dialect, which is close to both the Egyptian dialect and the dialect of the people of the Levant, the city of Aleppo, and the city of Mardin in Turkey. The Kurdish language is also spoken by a small number of Muslim Kurds living Bashiqa. There are also displaced people, students, and some families who work in the fields, from Sinjar, who speak the Kurmanji or Kurdish language. The Shabak people speak the Shabak language, and the Christian people speak Arabic and Syriac.

These groups live peacefully. While there are some tensions, they are under control because the Yazidis prefer peace. Accordingly, they tend to avoid conflict. There are cultural and religious differences between the peoples of the region, but this is a source of strength rather than weakness. In terms of clothing, the Yazidi people are characterised by wearing clothes close in style to Kurdish dress, which is a *sirwal* (Harem trousers) and shirt. Yazidi traditional dress is worn only on religious occasions, and sometimes old men wear the former Arab *agal* (headband). As for the Muslims, they wear the Arab *dishdasha* (a long robe with long sleeves), similar to the people of Mosul, and the Christians are inclined to wear Western clothing, such as trousers, shirts, and jackets.

There are also differences in rituals and religious ceremonies between the groups. The Yazidi element practises its religious rituals and ceremonies in religious shrines. They are also practised on Sheikh Hassan Hill, in the squares and in open areas, and the Yazidi celebrations are very close to the spring celebrations. Yazidis have religious celebrations called *Tawaf* that are always held in the spring, with beautiful customs and traditions filled with joy and happiness. Yazidis rarely have rituals or ceremonies inside a room or hall, except for wedding ceremonies, which are held in marriage halls in general. As for the Muslim and Christian groups, they practise their religious rituals either inside mosques or inside churches. However, from a cultural point of view, these ethno-religious groups are broadly similar.

1.2 The Yazidi genocide

The Yazidi minority in Iraq was subjected to genocide by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) on 3 August 2014 in the city of Sinjar. This terrorist organisation committed the most heinous types of crimes known in that period towards the Yazidis, which included killing men, capturing women, mass executions, the conversion to Islam by force, recruiting children to ISIS and training them in how to use weapons, and trading women by opening slave markets for Yazidi women (OHCHR 2016). When ISIS entered Bashiqā, they immediately blew up all the domes (Yazidi shrines) in order to try to tear apart and erase the cultural and religious identity of the Yazidis. These clear and explicit violations committed against cultural heritage were also a significant part of the genocide.

Immediately after ISIS entered Sinjar, Bashiqā's inhabitants decided to flee to northern Iraq, because they feared these criminal operations against the Yazidi. ISIS blew up 32 domes or shrines inside Bashiqā and Bahzani, and 21 *Nishan* (small domes). Their crimes did not end there: they also blew up the olive groves (Al-Adani 2021). As well as the demolition and burning of domes and olive groves, which were considered the identity of Bashiqā and Bahzani, ISIS also stole and blew up the factories, which were the source of livelihoods for the people of the area. Not a single rock was spared from the terrorist gangs of ISIS in Bashiqā.

1.3 The situation of women in the Yazidi community

The Yazidi woman in Bashiqā and Bahzani today have become more developed in terms of engaging in study, achieving qualifications, and taking up and succeeding in job roles. However, Yazidi women still suffer from marginalisation within both Yazidi and Iraqi society because of customs and traditions. For example, the Yazidi woman now works 'like a man' and relies on herself to make a living, but she still returns home as a housewife, mother, and wife. However, there are Yazidi women who cannot study or work because of racist views, due to a lack of safety, or even the absence of law. For example, one of the simplest rights that Yazidi women lose is competition with men for work, where Yazidi men are often chosen over Yazidi women because of the stigma of women taking maternity leave.

Yazidi women are also restricted in terms of clothing because of customs, traditions, and an absence of security. If women don't follow the dress code, they will be exposed to verbal and sexual harassment and exploitation. Therefore, the Yazidi woman today does

not have complete freedom in her choices. Further, in Iraqi society as a Yazidi, a woman cannot travel alone without a man or someone responsible for her due to fear of society's view of her. She is afraid of someone finding out that she is a Yazidi. Today, Yazidi women are considered to be a *Sabiya* (captive), or even an infidel, and consequently exposed to verbal harassment. Yazidi women may also be forced into slavery or even killed, just as the ISIS gangs did with Sinjar girls due to the belief that Yazidi girls are infidels.

Many Yazidi girls have many talents in various fields that are suppressed by Yazidi society through fear of how they will be portrayed by the wider Iraqi society. Therefore, there is no encouragement or support for them and their abilities. The majority of Yazidi girls do not exercise their rights in terms of work opportunities, and they suffer unemployment as they cannot go out into society and enter the field of work because of gender and religious-based discrimination. Widows can't find job opportunities easily because of people's views of them, and they are also vulnerable to exploitation. Community members believe that widows are vulnerable as no man is available to protect them.

The Yazidi widow is the biggest victim in society out of all of the categories of women because she loses all her rights. Her children are taken away and she is not permitted to marry again, and there is limited legal protection. A divorced woman is given a small pension, but this often isn't enough to meet the needs of her children. Further, the government doesn't provide divorced women with job opportunities, so it is difficult for them to fully realise their rights. This is partly due to constitutional error.

Yazidi women are therefore a little afraid of engaging with society because of the views held by wider Iraqi society. Society belittles Yazidi women's values and personalities. Additionally, Yazidi women have been raised on fear. In the present day, there has been a slight change in the lives of women after the entry of the ISIS terrorist gangs in Iraq. After the displacement, women saw much injustice and were further marginalised at the psychological level in the marketplace, with derogatory words said about Yazidi women. Sometimes, Yazidi women are also subjected to physical abuse. In addition, in health centres, Yazidi women aren't examined as they are seen as unclean. In schools and universities, Yazidis can't share their food with others, and they can't make friends easily. Yazidis always hear these words: 'You are Yazidi and you don't master the Kurdish language'. All of these issues put more pressure on Yazidi women.

However, despite everything they have been through, and everything they have seen in wider Iraqi society, Bashiqa women today have become more powerful and more open to society. They are not afraid to express their feelings, they are more powerful than they were before and are empowered to talk about the problems they face as Yazidis, including discrimination and displacement. Yazidi women have suffered a lot, yet the whole world seemingly did nothing, and the Iraqi government didn't respond to the killing, raping, selling, and enslavement of the Yazidis. The Yazidis therefore believe that they have to protect themselves. Today, they are stronger and more connected with other communities. The different culture of the hosting community has resulted in positive progress. Women have become bolder than before. The survivor Nadia Murad¹ is a good example of Yazidi women's increasing boldness.

However, day-to-day marginalisation continues for Yazidi women, men, and children, who are still seen as infidels, as not having a religion, and as being weak.

2 Research aims and methodology

The aim of this research is to identify and understand the problems facing Yazidi women and men within certain groups living in Bashiqa and Bahzani, with a particular focus on the unique challenges facing Yazidi women as both members of a religious minority and as women. This research sheds light on some of the needs and problems that the Yazidi community, and women in particular, suffer.

Participants for this research were selected using two methods:

- Posting on the social networking site 'Facebook' in women's groups in Bashiqa, to find out whether members felt they were being discriminated against or not, and searching for marginalised women.
- Visiting and liaising with the social committees in Bashiqa and Bahzani (the focus areas for this research because of the presence of the Yazidi communities there), as well as visiting the clergy and notable figures in the region in Bahzani and Bashiqa. The researcher also liaised with various organisations in the area, alongside visiting local women's associations.

¹ Nadia Murad is a Yazidi survivor of ISIS, a Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, and a UNODC Goodwill Ambassador. She lives in Germany and advocates for survivors of genocide and sexual violence through 'Nadia's Initiative', which actively works to persuade governments and international organisations to support the sustainable re-development of the Yazidi homeland (Nadia's Initiative 2022).

This research is considered the first of its kind to address the problems of discrimination facing the Yazidi people. Every person in the Bashiqa and Bahzani communities has been exposed to discrimination, both direct and indirect, and participants were not afraid of being involved in the research, of speaking up, and revealing the discrimination that Yazidis are subjected to.

The direct participation of marginalised women, talking openly about their problems, is a unique feature of this research. Yazidi women in Bashiqa and Bahzani were motivated to participate to share their stories and the day-to-day discrimination they still face that leaves them without power or strength. This research also shows the importance of men's participation in giving their voice to the problems facing them and Yazidi women in their society.

2.1 Research questions

To better understand the particular forms of marginalisation that Yazidi women in Bashiqa and Bahzani face, and the reasons for this marginalisation, the following questions were discussed in four focus group discussions (FGDs):

1. What are the problems you face being a man or a woman belonging to a religious minority?
2. Do you think you are facing these problems only because you belong to a religious minority?
3. Can you practise your customs and traditions comfortably and freely?
4. Have you been exposed to a situation that made you face discrimination, directly or indirectly?
5. What was the effect of this situation on you?
6. What are the side effects of differences in attitude towards being a man or a woman belonging to a religious minority?
7. Do you think if you were a man instead of a woman, you would be exposed to the same problem, and vice versa for men?

2.2 Research methods and participant selection

The research methods used were focus group discussions (FGDs) and participatory ranking. The FGDs were split, with two sessions with men and two sessions with women. The same questions were asked across all groups; namely, what issues they face in their

communities. As a result, this research is able to compare the experiences and priorities of men and women to identify how Yazidi women are uniquely marginalised.

The participants were identified by selecting the groups who were marginalised and exposed to discriminatory attitudes because they belong to a religious minority, through coordination with organisations in the region, social committees, notable figures, clerics, and women's associations located in Bashiqa, and posting on social networking sites (Facebook). The FGDs were held in a large hall belonging to the Olive Branch Organisation in Al Rabea neighbourhood in Bashiqa, Nineveh. Fifty participants were chosen and split into groups:

- First FGD (23 September 2021): 13 women
- Second FGD (7 December 2021): 13 women
- Third FGD (8 December 2021): 12 men
- Fourth FGD (9 December 2021): 12 men.

The ages of the participants in these focus groups ranged from 18 to 60 years old. Each focus group was formed of participants of different ages so that the younger participants could benefit from the experiences of the older participants. There was also diversity regarding social status as the session included single, married, and widowed women and men.

At the beginning of the session, the participants got to know each other and the researcher provided security and comfort, including through explaining confidentiality, especially in the women's groups, so that participants felt able to talk about their problems with ease and without fear or hesitation. The researcher then introduced the purpose of the study, how the session would take place, and explained how they could feel safe sharing their experiences because no one would hear them or listen to the sound recording, and there would be no pictures. They all agreed to take part. After that, an open discussion was facilitated on the problems and marginalisation that participants had all experienced.

On this basis, the FGDs identified the problems facing Yazidis as a religious minority with neither power nor authority. All of the problems were documented on flipchart paper, and each participant was given a notebook to rank the problems they encountered, from most important to least important, within ten minutes. After completing this participatory ranking exercise, the researcher asked each participant to explain why they chose the

first problem as the principle challenge they face in their daily life, and whether or not they had been through a situation or had a story that they would feel comfortable to share. The researcher also asked participants to explain how the situations and problems had affected them, and for the women, whether they believed that they would have experienced the same situation if they had been men.

2.3 Limitations, strengths, and challenges

One of the strengths of this research was the excellent cooperation between the women and the men, and the participants' very clear freedom of expression. They were strong focus groups, expressing their opinions comfortably and sharing difficult situations they had been through because they were Yazidis. These dialogues instilled great confidence in the women and broke through the barrier of their fear of expressing and speaking in public about the problems that they had faced and are still facing.

2.3.1 Drawbacks of the research

The most significant drawback of the research came from the Covid-19 pandemic, as Covid-19 caused fear for some participants. However, social distancing measures were implemented during the FGDs and health supplies provided to mitigate the impact of this challenge. Another obstacle was the disruption of all working hours due to the Iraqi elections. Otherwise the location for the FGDs was chosen as it was close to communities and easy to access. Therefore, the cost of travel to the location was not prohibitive for the participants, and the attendance was high from the region. Holding the sessions in Bashiqra also allowed women to attend the sessions.

2.3.2 Unique features

The distinguishing characteristics of this research are the sharing of information and the free and comfortable expression of opinions by the participants, which gave the sessions a weight and importance for everyone attending. Also, there is strength in the different views that all of the participants in the FGDs had, which allowed for greater insight into the problems facing the Yazidi community. Participants shed light on problems that the research was previously unaware of and had not previously paid attention to. Every woman who participated in these sessions challenged her fears and also gained confidence. Moreover, through this dialogue, Yazidi women who participated felt they could now demand more of their rights and freedom and express themselves as marginalised women. For example, after the FGD women felt more able to participate in other sessions in which they could express their opinions and raise their voices,

highlighting their problems, how they are different from men's, and working collaboratively on solutions.

2.3.3 Difficulties encountered

This research didn't encounter significant difficulties due to a high level of cooperation, including the social councils and notables of the region. The main challenges were around fear among participants of presenting their stories and ideas at the beginning of the sessions. However, over time participants were made to feel safe and given space to express themselves and speak. There were some additional challenges in finding men to participate because, as most of them are workers, they were not available to participate in the sessions. Subsequently, many of them apologised for not attending the workshop, and the researcher needed to search for more participants.

3 Research findings: the key threats and challenges facing Yazidi women because of their religion and gender

3.1 Summary of participatory ranking results

Table 1: Combined results of the participatory ranking for all four focus groups

Ranking	The problem	Women's results	Men's results	Total score
1	Education	235	124	359
2	Health	200	97	297
3	Safety and security	191	86	277
4	Unemployment	120	114	234
5	Freedom	207		207
6	Legal rights	116	90	206
7	Religious discrimination		175	175
8	Transportation	53	87	140

9	Language	112		112
10	Government role		112	112
11	Verbal harassment	111		111
12	Racism	110		110
13	Military service		86	86
14	Clothing and restraint	84		84
15	Not taking care of orphans	40		40

Source: Author's own.

Table 1 is an overview of the combined results of the participatory ranking for all four focus groups. The first column in this table shows the ranking of the problems listed in the second column. These were identified by the participants as issues facing Yazidi women and men. The participants voted on which problems they felt were most significant and detrimental to them. From these votes the overall priority order of the issues was calculated. The number of votes a problem received as the most important issue was multiplied by the total number of problems. This was then added to the number of votes the problem received as the second most important issue, multiplied by the total number of problems minus one. These figures were added to the number of votes the problem received as the third most important issue multiplied by the total number of problems minus two and so forth, all the way down to the votes for the least important problem multiplied by one, giving that problem a final ranking for those participants². Columns 3 and 4 show how the women and men voted differently on the importance of each of these issues.

² Total = ((number of votes for problem in first place)*(total number of problems))+((number of votes for problem in second place)*(total number of problems minus one))+((number of votes for problem in third place)*(total number of problems minus two)) and so forth. For example, ten women voted for education as the top priority issue, six as the second, one as the third and so forth, which created this equation: $10*12+6*11+1*10+1*9+1*8+2*7+1*4+4*1$, giving education a total weighting of 235. A weighting of 235 was the highest figure to come out of the equations, making education the top issue for women (and for all participants overall).

The priority issue that came out of the four FGDs combined was education. This was the top priority for Yazidi women by far. Yazidi men also felt that they suffered problems with education so it was also high up on their priority list. Ten women chose education as the most significant threat facing them, compared to five men who chose the same.

3.1.1 Prioritisation of issues by Yazidi women

Table 2: Prioritisation of issues by women

Women's ranking	Problem	No. of votes as top priority	Total result
1	Education	10	235
2	Freedom	4	207
3	Health	4	200
4	Safety and security	5	191
5	Unemployment		120
6	Legal rights		116
7	Language		112
8	Verbal harassment	1	111
9	Racism		110

10	Clothing and restraint	1	84
11	Transportation		53
12	Not taking care of orphans	1	40

Source: Author's own.

Table 2 contains 12 problems. These problems were the outcome of two sessions for women, and each session contained 13 participants. This table shows the order these problems were ranked in by the women only. See Appendix 1 for the ages of the women who voted for each issue as their top priority, detail which allowed for a more nuanced analysis. For example, while freedom came out as the second most pertinent issue, this was only voted as the top priority by those aged 36–50.

Some of the problems identified, such as unemployment, legal rights, language, and transportation, were not voted for as the top priority issue; however, they frequently featured lower down on the women's lists.

The table in Appendix 1 contains an additional column showing the equation for each issue, and therefore how the women voted on each issue when it wasn't their top priority.

Table 2 shows that the issues were only ranked in a slightly different order by the women alone when compared to Table 1, which shows the overall ranking. The first six issues are the same – education, freedom, health, safety and security, unemployment, and legal rights – with freedom being the biggest differential between the two (ranked second by the women compared to fifth in the total participant list). This is because 'freedom' was not identified by the men as being an issue facing them.

3.1.2 Prioritisation of issues by Yazidi men

Table 3: Prioritisation of issues by men

Men's ranking	Problem	No. of votes as top priority	Total results
1	Religious discrimination	11	175
2	Education	5	124
3	Unemployment		114
4	Government role	2	112
5	Health	2	97
6	Legal rights		90
7	Mobility/transportation		87
8	Safety and security	2	86
9	Military service	2	86

Source: Author's own.

While Table 3 shows that education still featured highly for the men, and that unemployment, health, and legal rights were also still in the top six, the men felt that the religious discrimination they face, particularly due to the existence of myths and stereotypes about the Yazidi people, and the role of the government in failing to protect them, were important issues they face.

The table in Appendix 2 contains an additional column showing the equation for each issue, and therefore how the men voted on each issue when it wasn't their top priority.

There are some differences in the ranking of issues when comparing the results from both the women's and the men's FGDs. For the men, they selected religious issues as a priority during their military service because they are always asked about their religion. They are also asked if they have tails because of commonly held myths and stereotypes about the Yazidis. Likewise, they may be asked why they don't wash for 40 days or whether they adore the devil. Men also mentioned that Yazidi men who work in other governorates, for example Erbil, Duhok, or Bagdad, are asked about their religion. Men in the FGDs believed that Iraqi people don't know about the Yazidi religion. It is likely that the women didn't mention religious discrimination as a priority because they don't come into contact with the wider Iraqi community to the same extent, due to gender discrimination and beliefs within the Yazidi community that restrict women to the home.

Also, men go to the governmental authorities, whereas women do not. Therefore, Yazidi men are more aware of laws compared with Yazidi women. Up to the present day, Iraqi law is governed by Islamic law. Yazidi men believe that they don't have rights. ISIS wasn't held accountable for any of their deeds. The Survivors Law (Amnesty International 2021) was issued only a year ago, despite the fact that the problems facing the survivors of ISIS are eight years old. In addition, this law isn't enforced.

For women, education is ranking as the principal issue, but for men, education comes in at second place, due to the fact that Yazidi men have more opportunities for education than Yazidi women in all respects. Yazidi men are not afraid to go to Mosul to study, and men have more freedom to move compared to Yazidi women. This is not because the men think that it is safe to move; indeed, many men were killed in Mosul. It is rather because men believe that they have sole responsibility for their families. They have to learn and work, even if they are forced to work in another city. However, Yazidi women are afraid to go to Mosul because of the situation and terrorism targeting Yazidis, and women's journey to study or work is seen as optional by the community. Further, a man can travel alone wherever he wants to complete his studies, but a Yazidi woman cannot travel alone, especially inside Iraq, as she is afraid of Iraqi Muslim men.

Through the FGD sessions, it was found that previously parents preferred young men to study rather than young girls. Today, however, it is true that education has become increasingly available for women and men at almost the same level. However, Yazidi

women still suffer in colleges and universities in several aspects; for example, Yazidi girls are very restricted in their clothes when going to university, and in some cases, it is imposed on them to wear headscarves, which Yazidi women do not wear as part of their religion or culture. Young women are forced to wear headscarves by their families so that they won't be different from others and recognised as being Yazidi. If they were to be recognised as being Yazidi, they would be exposed to marginalisation and verbal harassment. When applying for academic or governmental jobs, even where Yazidis may be among the most intelligent students and among the top of their cohort, because of racism and discrimination they are not able to fully realise their rights and they are not employed by many in universities and colleges. Yazidi women are exposed to this problem more than other women who have no religion.

There is a difference between the choices of women and men in perceptions of clothing as an issue. Men didn't consider clothes as a problem because the clothes that men wear are familiar to non-Yazidis, and men have the right to wear whatever they want. On the other hand, women selected clothes as a problem as they have a lot of restrictions placed on them in this regard. Although they wear multiple layers of clothing, the Muslim majority consider them to be infidels because they do not wear a headscarf. In the marketplace, the Yazidi woman is subjected to verbal harassment because of her traditional clothes, which don't incorporate a headscarf. Some Yazidi women are afraid to go to Mosul without a hijab as they would be exposed to verbal harassment and unkind looks from others. This contributes to the restriction of Yazidi women's freedom, both by themselves and also by their community.

Additionally, Yazidi women can't go out alone at night in Bashiqā, whereas men can go out whenever and wherever they want. Men can go to another town if they want because men are believed to be stronger than women. This may also explain why men are more frequently killed.

3.1.3 Priorities according to age

Table 4: Differences in the ranking of problems and issues based on age groups

Ranking	Discrimination type	No. of votes as top priority	Women	Men	Most common age group for each issue
1	Education	15 votes	10	5	20–35 years
2	Health	7 votes	4	3	35–50 years
3	Safety and security	7 votes	5	2	20–35 years
4	Ignorance in religious matters	5 votes	0	5	35–50 years
5	Freedom	4 votes	4	0	20–35 years
6	Religious issue	4 votes	0	4	20–35 years
7	Hate speech	2 votes	0	2	35–50 years
8	Harassment	1 vote	1	0	35–50 years
9	Clothing	1 vote	1	0	35–50 years
10	Orphan care	1 vote	1	0	35–50 years
11	Military service	1 vote	0	1	35–50 years
12	Government role	1 vote	0	1	35–50 years
13	The return of ISIS families	1 vote	0	1	35–50 years

Source: Author's own.

Table 4 shows the differences in the ranking of problems and issues based upon age groups. For example, health is a priority for those who are older as there are no hospitals nearby in Bashiqa. The nearest hospital is in Mosul. If the patient decided to go to Erbil or Dohuk, they may die before reaching the hospital because these two cities are so far away. Older people didn't mention education as they lost their right to education in the past due to poverty or the fear their families had of sending them to schools. However, people between 20–35 years old don't have jobs after finishing their education. They are jobless. The younger participants chose education as a priority because of their perception of the bad quality of education in the present time. In terms of other problems, namely language, racism, and transportation, these problems are common among all age groups.

3.2 Analysis

The following sections discuss each of the problems identified by the participants in more detail, with the view to capturing their voices and realities. They follow the order of problems identified in Table 1, where the data are aggregated for all participants.

3.2.1 Education

Through the sessions, education was highlighted by both Yazidi women and Yazidi men as a significant problem. It was discovered that there is a difference between women's choices and men's choices for education, and overall, women suffer more than men. Yazidi women face many obstacles to going to school while men, as mentioned previously, have more freedom.

For example, Yazidi women lost their right to education and receiving their graduation certificate for several reasons, including fear of society's view of them, and the views of Yazidi men. Yazidi men unconsciously uphold the customs and traditions imposed by the wider, conservative Iraqi society. This research found a big difference between women and men in terms of attitudes and access to education. Men are not afraid when they go to Mosul to study, and they can also travel wherever they want. However, women cannot travel because of the governing customs and traditions that dictate that women should stay at home.

Participants also gave specific examples of how they had been discriminated against in education because of their Yazidi identity. They felt that there was a clear violation of the rights of minorities, especially the Yazidis, due to the lack of curricula on the history of

the Yazidis. This is due to the government's weakness in amending the Iraqi Constitution, and also weakness in the institution of education.

One of the women, a 28-year-old unemployed university graduate who lives in Bashiqa, told us,

there is a clear violation in the institution of education, as a law student cannot become a judge. The Iraqi law stipulates that the Yazidi, men or women, don't have the right to be judges because Yazidi don't have a holy book to vow on. The Iraqi Constitution didn't formulate any article to handle this issue. This is despite the intensive study that the student undertakes. The reason is because he is a Yazidi, and this thing is very sad and threatens the students' academic life.

It is permitted that only Christian and Muslim women can become judges. Yazidi women are not allowed to become judges.

Another of the women, a 45-year-old housewife from Bahzani, agreed:

In my view, the Yazidi students at the University of Mosul are subjected to great discrimination by their colleagues of other religions. The most prominent of them is not accepting them, staying away from them in many cases, not mixing with them, and not eating Yazidis' food. Yazidi women are more exposed to marginalisation compared to men. Accordingly, marginalisation has more effect on young women. Such words have become very sad for us now that we are in this advanced age, but there are those who marginalise us and do not eat with us.

Language also plays a part in Yazidi discrimination. A 32-year-old woman from Bahzani, who has a university degree but is unemployed, stated that,

in my view, the language is also a problem that we face because we are Yazidis. For example, when we go to colleges and universities in Dohuk and do not speak the Kurdish language, in this case we are exposed to discrimination, or in other regions when we do not speak the same language as them, they do not accept us.

Furthermore, a 28-year-old woman from Bashiqa, a graduate of the Faculty of Sports at the University of Mosul, who is also unemployed, shared her story of facing violence while trying to attend University:

I will talk about a situation that happened during my studies. In 2013, university students were going to Mosul to the university with drivers. They did not know that there was a story of discrimination awaiting them. The Yazidi students were dropped out from cars and buses. After that, five drivers went to the café near the University of Mosul to wait for them until the end of work. They did not know that they were being watched by a terrorist group targeting the Yazidis in Mosul. After they sat in the café, they were targeted with machine guns, shot and killed, and the news spread among the Yazidi students within minutes and terrified them. Those were the ugliest moments the students have gone through. How will they return home and have no drivers? Basically, they did not know if they would return or not because they were being watched. So they all gathered in one place in the university and called their parents to come and get them. The signs of fear were clear on them, as well as the fear of their families. All this just because they are a Yazidi minority.

So we had to leave school in Mosul for a year, and I did not forget that day and the amount of fear and terror that we experienced as Yazidis. As a result, most students were forced to leave their studies at the university in that year, and when we wanted to submit a transfer to the University of Hamdania,³ they did not allow us because the priority was given to Christians, in addition to the unavailability of most of the academic departments at Hamdania University. I also remember at that time that I had finished school and was coming from one stage to another new stage in my life, when I went for the first time in my university life and I was very excited that I would start my university journey, but what happened? They killed the Yazidi drivers in Mosul. I remember that I lived unforgettable moments in my life that almost killed me. I was walking and I was afraid to say that I am a Yazidi so that they would not kill me, and since that day I have been afraid to go to Mosul.

Experiences like this are dangerous for Yazidi women's lives and spirits. They have lost trust in being able to access education.

Many participants shared stories of discrimination while trying to access education, and many of them are unemployed despite having degrees. This shows how Yazidis not only

³ An area where Christians are in the numerical majority.

face discrimination in access to quality education but are also then marginalised in job opportunities. The 28-year-old woman above shared that,

there are many male and female graduates who have not found a job yet. Meaning a person has been studying and tiring for 16 years or more, in addition to the psychological pressures he is exposed to during education and the risks he faces while studying at universities from those that target the Yazidis. Despite all that he is going through, he is resisting the difficult life circumstances in order to obtain a university degree. Then he does not get a job, and the degree remains only ink on paper and remains on the wall. And he goes to work like any working person who does not have a certificate. With all due respect to all workers, the university student suffered a lot to obtain a degree in order to serve his country and to benefit from his experiences, in addition to the fatigue of his family, financially and psychologically, but in the end, there is no employment for us or work.

3.2.2 Health

Women voiced their concerns regarding health because of the discrimination, fear, and marginalisation they face while going to Mosul. They feel a direct threat to them and their newly born children because there is no maternity hall in the area and they fear that their children will be replaced by other children, or not cared for well. For example, one of the women, a 30-year-old housewife, from Bashiqa, shared a situation she faced when she was in labour:

I went to the hospital in Qaraqosh [a predominantly Christian town], the doctor did not allow me to enter and allowed another woman to enter because I did not speak the same language as their city. This situation was very difficult for me.

During the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, the women felt that the discrimination they experience in health care was further exacerbated. The same woman explained how,

Bashiqa and Bahzani are among the areas that already lack the simplest health centres, so during the Covid-19 crisis, there were only four cans of oxygen, and there was no government support. The area also lacked an ambulance, as well as any protective equipment. The people were afraid to go to the health centres due to the lack of new and good health facilities and supplies. We have learnt

when we went to the health centre to take a corona test swab, the result would take seven days or more, and it also lacked credibility.

The participants shared examples of how they had been discriminated against while trying to access health care because they are Yazidi. One woman shared how she was misdiagnosed by a doctor because they didn't want to give her the necessary treatment:

I was complaining of pain in the abdomen and they took me to the clinic. The doctor who saw me was a Muslim. She said I should have an operation just so she wouldn't have to treat me. Basically, I didn't have an appendix and the cause of the pain was food poisoning only.

She further shared a belief she had heard about Yazidis which she felt contributed to non-Yazidis' reluctance to treat them:

There is a false stereotype of the Yazidis, that we do not wash for 40 days, and this affects the Yazidis. This stereotype comes from an absence of any background knowledge about the Yazidi religion. Some doctors do not like examining the Yazidi person because of this, except for the few doctors who have not heard this stereotype.

The consequences of these Yazidi women not receiving the treatment and care that they need range from the women losing trust in doctors to their very lives being endangered, as described by one of the women, a 50-year-old housewife who lives in Bahzani:

I had a very difficult situation in terms of health. My daughter was in her teens and as a result of certain circumstances, including her failure in a school subject, she took pills and tried to kill herself without our knowledge. We took her to the health clinic. They did not accept to treat her until the police came and investigated the cause of the attempted suicide. They simply watch my daughter's situation and did not treat her until the police came. By this time, I was so devastated that at any moment I might lose my daughter. I tried more than once to have her treated, but they did not agree to that until the doctor came and asked to treat her. Then, an investigation was submitted to the police, and when they prepared to treat her, we discovered that the medical equipment and devices for gastric lavage were not working, and out of work.

They asked to take her to the hospital, and we waited an hour for the ambulance to come. After a long wait, the ambulance came and took her to the hospital.

When the doctor saw her, he was very angry because of negligence, and said she should be kept under observation for 24 hours because you were late in assisting her, and this had endangered her life. The doctor asked me to sit next to her and not let her sleep because if she sleeps even for one minute, she will fall into a coma. The amount of fear of falling apart I experienced that day is never out of my mind. I know that the first reason is due to her taking pills and attempting to kill herself, but the biggest mistake is due to the health staff, who were late in treating her and the shortage of medical devices and equipment has a great impact as well.

Yazidi women have suffered and still suffer in the field of health because of this prejudice and discrimination.

3.2.3 Safety and security

Yazidi women lack security and safety in all respects. They feel insecure and unsafe even in their homes. Home is supposed to be the place where one feels secure, so feeling unsafe at home is the highest level of insecurity. For example, Sinjar's inhabitants were at their homes when they were attacked by ISIS. Therefore, Bashiqa's inhabitants also feel afraid. Yazidi women also feel unsafe when moving around and in terms of practising their rituals with comfort and security. Many Yazidi women lost job opportunities inside the city of Mosul because of their inability to move between Mosul and Bashiqa. Their family members feel afraid that the women may be exposed to harm, so they want to protect them by restricting them to the home. Yazidi women also restrict themselves because they have been raised with a sense of fear. This lack of safety and security affects Yazidi women's and girls' ability to travel to Mosul to access education and medical care.

For example, one of the women, a 27-year-old graduate, shared that she was eagerly waiting to go to university,

but the first day I started work, they killed four drivers from Bashiqa and Bahzani, and for this reason I left my studies for a whole year, the reason for targeting the Yazidis. Knowing that those who were killed were Yazidi men.

Specifically, the participants expressed a particular fear about the danger of the road linking Mosul and Bashiqa. Another of the women, a 30-year-old from Bahzani, explained how this lack of safety and security also restricts Yazidi women's job opportunities, leading to high levels of unemployment:

Most of the time, organisations publish links to apply and work sites are in Mosul. This is difficult for us, as Yazidi women. The lack of security and safety means that we cannot travel to Mosul, and therefore cannot apply for the jobs there. This is one of the reasons for the increase in unemployment.

Additionally, participants explained how even if they were able to obtain employment, the safety and security situation often made it unsafe for them to continue working there, forcing them to leave and become unemployed.

Another 36-year-old female graduate shared how this lack of safety and security wasn't always something Yazidi women faced:

I was born in the eighties and lived in the era of the regime. I lived in a time in which there was some level of safety. Since 2003 until now there is no safety or security.

After 2003, terrorism significantly increased in Iraq in general and in Mosul in particular. Kidnapping, killing, robbery, and explosions have increased. Moreover, racism has also increased.

Participants discussed the importance of safety as a basic prerequisite for living in peace and stability, and the reality of living without it. One of the women described losing her father in a violent attack that targeted Yazidis:

In 2007, there were workers working in a textile factory in Mosul, and one day they were going to work in Mosul to earn a living. They were going by bus, and one day, on their way back to their homes after work, a terrorist group ([looking like] bandits) came out to them carrying weapons and machine guns in Mosul. They stopped the bus and entered it, so the head of this gang spoke to the workers present in the bus and told them who among you belongs to the Christian religion, and who belongs to the Yazidi religion and who belongs to the Muslim religion. Then each group belonging to the different religion was separated from the other, and they also collected Iraqi citizenship cards for the purpose of verifying their religion. After that, Christians and Muslims were taken off the bus and released.

Under the direct threat of weapons, the bus was taken to one of the neighbourhoods of Mosul, and the Yazidi men were disembarked, then handcuffed and told them to lie on the ground; 'you infidel Yazidis, you will die

today because your religion is an infidel religion and you do not deserve to live'. And in the ugliest situation in human history, 24 poor Yazidi workers were gunned down and killed. It is not their fault except that he belongs to a religious minority. Their bodies were left in the streets until the people of Bashiqqa were asked to come and take their bodies, and only one of them survived. In those days, Bashiqqa was grieving for a week over what happened. This incident is considered the biggest direct discrimination incident that ever happened then, where five people from the same family died, and three people from another family died.

Living with this level of fear and insecurity has forced many Yazidi to emigrate, leaving their families in order to obtain a small part of their rights. One of the women, a 40-year-old housewife from Bashiqqa, explained how,

many situations happened to us during the displacement, most notably the refusal of some Muslim families to receive the Yazidis in their homes and provide them with a helping hand and assistance. We left our city and our homes and were forced to leave it because we were Yazidis. When we returned, we returned to empty houses of property. Some of the houses were demolished and burned, and even those who returned to their homes [that] were not demolished or burned, but his house was looted. In addition to the burning of olive trees in the area, which was a source of livelihood for hundreds of families in the area, in addition to the amount of open air that these trees produced. The hard work of all those years in order to build a house and provide a job to take care of our children disappeared overnight and forced us to leave our money, our homes, and our possessions just because we were Yazidis.

The destruction was not only restricted to the individual private property of the Yazidis. One woman, a 52-year-old housewife, also from Bashiqqa, shared how the Yazidi shrines and cemeteries were also demolished. This,

left a shock in all of our hearts. It is very difficult when you see the graves of your parents, relatives or friends destroyed, and some of them have not left any trace. Also, with their criminal actions, not even the dead were spared.

The participants felt that Yazidi women suffered most severely during this period of displacement due to their entry into a new environment completely different from the previous lives they were living. Due to the culture difference, the majority of Yazidi

women didn't go out in Bashiqa. While being displaced, many women mentioned that this was their first time seeing Dohuk or Erbil. They found it difficult to accept the new community. The insecurity had a clear impact on their psychological state and stripped them of confidence.

3.2.4 Unemployment

Unemployment is one of the main problems facing women and men of minorities that were discussed in all focus group discussions. This is a dangerous indicator for the future of young people and future generations. Also, the Iraqi government has been unfair in this field because when the Ministry of Education opened the door for appointments, the ministry allocated an application form in which there was a field for religion, and when looking at this choice, the name of the Yazidi religion was absent. This fact demonstrated a clear and deliberate discrimination, and the women participants said that they could not work in Mosul or the places near Mosul because of the way people look at them and the discrimination they face. Yazidi women don't have the confidence to go out and work due to what Yazidis are exposed to in Mosul. Families don't allow women to go to, or work in, Mosul as they are afraid that they may be exposed to verbal harassment or kidnapped, unlike men who can work in Mosul, Dohuk or even Baghdad.

First and foremost, the participants discussed the lack of work within Bashiqa and the areas where Yazidis live, leading them to seek employment further afield, where they are subjected to discrimination. For example, one of the women, a 52-year-old housewife who lives in Bashiqa, said:

I am creative in handicrafts and can do all forms of handicrafts but I cannot go to another governorate to work, as they [the Muslim majority] may refuse me and refuse my work because I am Yazidi. I also cannot work in Bashiqa because of the weak market, and also I do not have the mechanisms that help my work there.

Some Yazidis do manage to work outside of Bashiqa, however, they may be forced to work in a place where they must not be seen by anyone, so that no one knows that they are Yazidis, and they are stopped from working in the kitchen in some restaurants because it is not permissible to eat the food if it is prepared by Yazidis. One of the participants, a 23-year-old student, said:

If one wants to open a bakery, he must hire a Muslim person so that Muslims come and buy from him. When they [the Muslim majority] know that the owner of the bakery is Yazidi, they take their money and leave.

Tragically, the participants were able to recall specific examples of when Yazidi businesses had been deliberately targeted, defamed, and eventually closed down because of their Yazidi ownership. For example, one of the participants, a 54-year-old from Bahzani, told the group about Muslim workers working in the factory of a Yazidi man:

There is a Yazidi man who had a factory for the manufacture of tahini for 30 years, which was very well known in Iraq. But in the year 2020, this factory was subjected to a campaign of distortion and misrepresentation of the product by workers who were from outside the region and belong to another religion; the workers did that because the owner is Yazidi. They licked the product before the canning process, and this clip was filmed and published on all social media sites, so that this video reached the media channels, where the factory owner was exposed to legal issues and the factory was closed with red wax and the work permit was withdrawn, the owner of the factory was arrested and fines imposed on him.

Another issue that was raised by participants, and which affects the Yazidi youth specifically, is the lack of work opportunities for graduates. This also affects young men and women of the Muslim majority. The difference is that if a Yazidi graduate were to obtain a job, they would be paid less than their Muslim counterpart. There are female graduate students who do not have any work; they have finished their undergraduate studies and now sit at home unemployed because the government today does not have the ability to employ graduates. They are without jobs and are forced to work in shops, restaurants, and cafeterias in Erbil, Dohuk, Baghdad, or Mosul, and as explored previously, when they work in these areas, they are subjected to marginalisation and discrimination.

Having to travel so far from home also opens these young people up to dangerous situations, including unsafe roads in Iraq, particularly when it is known that they are Yazidi, as they may be exposed to kidnapping. Additionally, they may resort to behaviours which are strange to their customs and traditions, such as drinking, drugs, and hashish, and some of them may deviate from their morals and upbringing. This is because of the pressures they face at work from their non-Yazidi colleagues. Therefore, the government must provide job opportunities for minority youth to reduce the pressures of poverty or need, and to ensure that they are able to provide for themselves and their families.

3.2.5 Freedom

Freedom was the first issue not to be mentioned in all focus group discussions, as the women were the only participants to mention freedom as an issue they faced. They expressed freedom as one of the most beautiful things in life, because freedom is general and belongs to everyone. In the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations 2021), there is a complete article related to freedom, which is the second article:

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.

Freedom is again mentioned in Article 3: 'Everyone has the right to life, liberty and the security of person' (*ibid.*). It was for this reason that one of the participants, a 52-year-old housewife from Bashiqā, chose freedom as the top issue facing Yazidi women and girls:

I chose freedom as the first problem facing me because, with freedom, the individual can exercise his/her life and his abilities and in order to be free from injustice and enslavement, and in the absence of freedom, we will become like a dark room, we do not differentiate between right and wrong.

Yazidi women lack freedom in society because Iraqi society does not care about freedom to a large extent. The 52-year-old housewife continued:

Being a Yazidi woman is in itself a situation of losing my freedom.

Participants agreed that a lack of freedom underpins all the other issues they face. One of the women, a 35-year-old housewife from Bashiqā, explained their situation in the following way:

Because I am a Yazidi woman and an orphan, I do not have freedom. If I had complete freedom, I could work outside my area or open my own business, but this is difficult. At the present time, Yazidi women do not have freedom because they experience many restrictions in all fields. Women are always the concern of their families because of the outer community that has its pressures on women,

unlike men. Absence of safety and security is a threat for women and men; however, men are bolder than women. There is also a difference between women and men in terms of freedom in choosing clothes and in travelling, with women being more restricted. However, men are also restricted outside the Bashiqa community to some extent by the lack of safety and security.

The women in the focus groups recognised that they live in an Eastern Iraqi society where people have a negative view of women. This is the reason Yazidi women and girls are more restricted in their freedom than Yazidi men and boys. The 52-year-old woman quoted above explained how this affects her specifically:

We all go through difficult situations in our daily lives. For example, as a Yazidi woman, I like to move around and go out sometimes to the cafeteria or restaurant or go out for entertainment, but we (women) cannot because our freedom is restricted. We live in a community surrounded by people who despise us. The region lacks recreational places only for women, such as libraries, cafeterias, restaurants, and even freedom of expression, as women cannot express their freedom honestly; men, including Yazidi men, must take the opinion of women in decision-making or change, and it is necessary for women to participate in politics.

While Yazidi women participate in entertainment activities in Bashiqa, such as festivals, if these activities are held outside Bashiqa, women are unable to participate.

It was clear from the discussions that it is not only wider Iraqi society that limits the freedom of Yazidi women and girls. While their religious and ethnic identity plays a significant part in the discrimination and marginalisation they face, participants were able to recognise how they themselves, and the Yazidi community, restrict the freedom of Yazidi women and girls. For example, a 42-year-old housewife from Bashiqa, explained that,

when we lose freedom, we lose self-confidence and comfort in the practice of our daily lives. In 2019, my daughter graduated from middle school and wanted to complete her studies at an institute in Mosul. Because of the conditions that the Yazidis had gone through in the city of Mosul in previous years and their exposure to violations and attacks, we refused that our daughter complete her education in Mosul.

Another of the women, a 40-year-old housewife from Bashiqa, described this fear and discomfort in the following way:

We are trapped and bound since childhood and until now, and we know that there are people who watch us and hold us accountable for the smallest mistake.

3.2.6 Legal rights

Legal rights are almost non-existent for the Yazidis in all respects, whether in the decisions of the state, in the parliament of Iraq, or in the laws applied to them. One of the problems facing the people of Bashiqa is the return of the children and families of ISIS, as the Iraqi government decided to bring some of the families of ISIS from the Al-Hol camp in Syria to the south of Mosul, in the Qayyarah camps. There was a negative reaction against this decision by the Yazidi community and other communities that were subjected to genocide and crimes against humanity at the hands of ISIS. The resistance was due to several issues, including:

1. The absence of a transitional justice system for the families of the Yazidi and other victims.
2. The lack of compensation for victims and their families, while the families of ISIS are returning to Iraq on government-subsidised buses.
3. The remains of victims are still being buried while the families of ISIS are passing by on roads from those areas to their new settlements.
4. The fate of the victims and their families has still not been resolved and has not been properly dealt with, while the Iraqi government is rushing to return the families of ISIS.
5. The Iraqi government has resettled the families of victims without addressing the issues of indoctrination and violent extremism in attitudes towards others. Yazidi children were trained in using weapons, killing, and how to say Muslim prayers as part of efforts to strip them of their ethno-religious identity, as well as being taught a hatred of other religions. After being freed from ISIS, the government has integrated them into the community without removing these ideas or offering them psychological intervention.
6. The areas that were subjected to genocide of the Yazidis and others are still afraid of the return of ISIS, while the families of ISIS are received by the government and resettled.
7. The government is deficient in solving the problems of minority and Yazidi communities in terms of the plurality of security forces. There is an absence of

government support for vital projects and in terms of helping members of those areas return from displacement, while the Iraqi government insists on the return of ISIS families.

All of this has created a negative reaction to the Iraqi government's return and reception of ISIS families.

Examples of legal rights that negatively affect Yazidis:

- It is not permissible in Iraqi law to have a Yazidi judge.
- The Personal Status Identity Law in Article 26, second paragraph, is considered a flagrant violation of the rights of the Yazidis, as the law states that if one of the parents converts to Islam, then the children will be registered to the Muslim religion. This will result in all of their original documents being changed.
- It is important to acknowledge that the Iraqi law oppresses Yazidis. When Yazidis want to document their marriage contract, a lot of obstacles are placed in their way. For example, they are expected to get married under Islamic law.

3.2.7 Religious discrimination

In this aspect, women's participation was less compared to men because women in Yazidi society are kept distant from religious affairs and involvement in religious issues. This alone is an example of the gender discrimination that Yazidi women face from their own community, as they want to know more about such issues and have the right to be involved in religious discussions and affairs, but are prevented from being present. Religious discrimination was described by the men in the focus groups as coming from ignorance regarding religion or religious issues and the misconceptions that people from other communities in Iraq have about the Yazidi religion and Yazidi practices. Even though the women did not highlight this as an issue, it does affect women. Women are also asked inflammatory and offensive questions about their religion when they are out in public, but they do not leave the Yazidi community as often as men.

Some common stereotypes and incorrect beliefs about Yazidis that participants shared include the following:

- Yazidis worship Satan. This quote is considered to be normal for the Yazidis because they hear this almost daily, especially in colleges and universities. When Yazidis go to study in colleges and when others know that they are Yazidis, they will often ask: 'Do you worship Satan?'

- The Yazidis have a tail from behind. One of the participating men told us that they were often told while in military service that the Yazidis had a tail, so some would ask them: 'Can you turn around to see your tail?' Thus, some were laughing at the Yazidis and bullying them.
- The Yazidis do not wash for 40 days. The participants in the sessions said that when they went to the doctors for treatment, the doctors used to tell them that they do not treat the Yazidis because they do not wash for 40 days.
- The Yazidis do not have a holy book. However, the Yazidis are a people who have been subjected to 74 campaigns of genocide, the last of which was at the hands of ISIS. It was preceded by 73 other genocides, during which Yazidi holy books were burned, in addition to killing, insulting, and looting. The Yazidis also have a holy book which is the manuscript, the *Black Book Rash* and the *Jelwa Book*, but unfortunately they are not available today; it is said that these are held in the Louvre Museum in Paris, France.
- The Yazidis are infidels. One participant said that his friends used to say to him, 'Oh, infidel, come here', and they did not call him by his name.

The men in the focus groups shared many examples of discrimination they had faced because of these stereotypes and myths. One man, a 51-year-old member of the military from Bashiqah, explained how members of the majority religion in the military did not mix with the Yazidis. However,

I had a friend from Hilla who was an open and educated person. Years passed and he came to visit me in my house after 15 years, so I hosted him in my house, and when he entered my house and saw the toilet, he said to me, in amazement, 'Do you have toilet?' I talked to him about the matter and I understood from him that one of the Muslims in Bashiqah told him that the people of Bashiqah do not have bathrooms in their homes. I was astonished by his words, and I told him how they spread such propaganda on us, and I laughed at the topic. But when I took him on a tour inside Bashiqah, he was impressed by the level of sophistication and cleanliness in Bashiqah.

Unfortunately, not all of the men experienced a positive outcome when they interacted with those who held these incorrect beliefs. One man, a 35-year-old from Bashiqah, outlined a situation that happened to him during the period of displacement:

When I was living in Zairin [an area in Erbil], the neighbours would come and visit us, and when he learnt that we are Yazidis, they started moving away from us, as the mullah [Imam] used to say that it is forbidden to deal with the Yazidis in all ways because they are infidels.

Additionally, in recent years, social media has played a role in the spread of hate speech against minorities, especially religious minorities. Most recently, it was particularly noticeable when Pope Francis visited Nineveh Governorate and attended the funeral of the spiritual father of the Yazidi religion (Al Jamil 2021). The participants also noted that this discourse increases during religious holidays and occasions for minorities due to the lack of cultural awareness in the wider Iraqi community, which lives under a strict religious discourse. There is also a lack of accountability by the judicial authorities.

As mentioned above, the participation of women on the topic of religious issues was minimal, or even completely non-existent. This is due to their lack of direct involvement with society as a result of the restrictions placed on them as women. For example, there is not only a lack of Yazidi political participation in the local authority in the governorate of Nineveh and Bashiqa, but also a lack of women. This has resulted in Yazidi women not knowing their rights, their needs, or their suffering. No one conveys Yazidi women's voices. Therefore, while the men felt that addressing the issue of religious discrimination was the main problem facing the Yazidi community, this would only improve the lives of Yazidi women in one respect.

However, the participants felt that this religious discrimination was not only a result of stereotypes and myths. It is also institutionalised. For example, there is a violation by the government and government institutions due to the absence of documented official holidays for minorities, as there are for other religious groups. There is also a weakness in the Iraqi Constitution in that there is no personal status law that guarantees the rights of minorities to facilitate their lives. While there is a law in Kurdistan, it could be argued that Bashiqa is under the control of the Iraqi government.

Lastly, participants expressed concern about the clear demographic change that is happening in the Bashiqa and Bahzani areas that threatens the lives of the existing community. They also expressed their fear of an unknown future, especially regarding the housing associations that have a major role in change.

3.2.8 Transportation

There are restrictions on Yazidi women's movement compared to Yazidi men. Women are not allowed to go out of the home at night, otherwise they will be criticised by the Yazidi community. In addition, women can't travel alone outside their community as they risk being exposed to verbal harassment or exploitation. Women are believed to be weak compared to men. For example, one of the women, a 30-year-old housewife, shared how the absence of women travelling and moving alone from one place to another due to the absence of security exposes her to verbal harassment. Additionally, another housewife stated that they

think that man has more freedom to move compared to girl. Man can go to work in Mosul while girls can't. Girls can't go to Mosul alone. When she goes to a doctor, a male member of her family should accompany her. Man also believes that he can move alone because Yazidi man looks like all other men.

However, one of the men, a 51-year-old from Bashiqa explained how men face discrimination when they travel outside of the Yazidi community too:

We face discrimination at work, education, trade, and moving. If anyone knows that you are Yazidi, they change the way they treat you 180 degrees. They act with racism. They always attack you. This is a normal situation in our daily life.

3.2.9 Language

Language is a problem for both men and women in Bashiqa as their language is different from the language used in north Iraq. Yazidi women selected language as a top priority because language is a problem in universities, markets, and medical centres in north Iraq. They are always told: 'You are Yazidi. You don't know Kurdish.' Yazidi in other villages speak Kurdish; however, they are forced to speak Arabic.

One of the women, a 32-year-old unemployed university graduate from Bahzani explained that,

from my perspective, language is a problem because we are Yazidi. For example, when we went to Duhok, we don't speak Kurdish. In this case we are exposed to discrimination. When we don't talk the same language, they don't accept us because we are Yazidi and we speak Arabic.

Another woman, a 26-year-old housewife from Bahzani agreed:

I went to Duhok and talked in Arabic. The driver asked: 'Do you speak Kurdish?' We said: 'We don't know because our region is near Mosul and we don't know Kurdish.' He kept saying: 'May God forgive me. Get out of my car.' He refused to drive us because we are Yazidi and don't talk Kurdish despite the fact that Kurdish people like the Yazidi.

Discrimination based on language differences severely impact education and job opportunities. For example, one of the women, a 45-year-old widow and housewife from Bahzani explained how

while displaced, my daughter studied in Duhok University. Professors explain in Kurdish. She didn't understand. She asked them to use Arabic or English. They refused because they know that she is Yazidi. She came home crying. This problem lasted four years.

Another of the women, a 50-year-old housewife, agreed:

My son used to work in El Bishmarka. A Kurdish person asked him in his job: 'Why you don't say that you are Kurdish?' My son replied, 'Because I speak Arabic and not Kurdish.' This person asked him: 'Why do you speak Arabic?' My son replied, 'Because of the genocides that we have been exposed to in history. So, I speak Arabic.' Again, the person said: 'You are Yazidi and your religion is written in Kurdish. This is why you should speak Kurdish.' My son said: 'No problem. Our religion is written in Kurdish. Now let me ask you: You are Kurdish and your religion is written in Arabic. Why you don't speak Arabic?' Because of this dialogue my son had a problem with this person.

In the past, the Yazidi people used to speak Kurdish but because of the genocides the Yazidi were forced to change their geographic location, which led to changing their language. The Kurdistan region is full of Yazidi people who were forced to change their religion. They have been forced to leave certain areas. Some of the women in the FGDs were afraid that the Bashiqqa dialect will disappear.

This fear was articulated by one of the women, an unemployed university graduate from Bashiqqa:

Migration and genocide affected our language. For example, after the invasion of ISIS to our areas, many people emigrated outside Iraq. Their children were born abroad. So they learnt the language of the area where they live. By [that] time,

their Bashiqai language isn't known. Even, we don't know some terms that are only known to old people.

3.2.10 The role of the government

The role of the government was the tenth issue identified by participants. However, it was only identified as a problem by the men, as women don't go to the governmental organisations. The government's role in preserving religious and ethnic minorities is almost non-existent, and there is no government cover aimed at protecting religious minorities, including the Yazidis. Also, the Iraqi government is very weak in holding the defaulters to account. The male participants felt that all the other problems they mentioned are due to the government's weakness in supporting duties and responsibilities.

They identified the levels of weakness in legal texts as follows:

1. The system of national legislation is deficient in dealing with minorities, especially in terms of protecting existence and identity.
2. National legislation includes a lot of discrimination when dealing with minorities. For example, in Article 372, the penalty for anyone who assaults a church or place of worship for non-Muslims is reduced, while if a member of a minority group assaults a mosque, the penalty is severe.
3. National policies do not focus on minorities and do not give them a space of protection and guarantees.
4. Social discrimination is prevalent, as minorities are exposed to clear societal discrimination. They feel vulnerable because the government doesn't care for them.

The participants felt that successive Iraqi governments have not paid attention to the issue of minorities in a remarkable way, and did not put guarantees and actions in their government programmes that emphasise them. However, they did highlight the fact that, for the first time in the history of Iraq, political recognition for minorities is achieved through the quota system, which is allocated to each minority: Christians (five national seats), Yazidis (one seat), Shabaks (one seat), Sabeen-Mandaeans (one seat), and finally, Faili Kurds (one seat). This has a negative impact on decision-making while voting in the People's Assembly. In addition, the one seat bears a lot of responsibility and burden. However, while this seat could be, in theory, for a man or woman, in practice it is highly

unlikely to go to a woman due to customs and traditions that restrict women from participating in politics.

Thus, the quota guarantees a specific level of political participation for Yazidis. On the other hand, there are other minorities not mentioned above that were not included in the quota system, such as the Kakais, Zoroastrians, Baha'is, people of brown skin, and Gypsies. Participants also identified how the government is committed to the ratified international legislation, and among those legislations there are many that deal with the protection of religious, national, ethnic, and linguistic minorities. However, participants expressed that the government does not pay attention to minority issues in the state reports submitted to the UN mechanisms, whether in Geneva or New York.

Recently, in March 2021, the Yazidi Survivors Law was issued, which includes all minority women, not just the Yazidis. This legislation is considered a great victory for Iraqi women and for the Yazidi survivors who were subjected to genocide at the hands of ISIS, and this legislation is the only legislation to help redress the grievances of minorities. The Yazidi community looks forward to this law being enforced as soon as possible. Participants expressed hope that the Iraqi government will allocate a budget to implement the articles of this law to ensure equality and justice. The Iraqi government has opened an office for the survivors. The director of this office reported that it is a positive step forward from the side of the Iraqi government. However, the government has yet to allocate a budget for this office in the second year of the issuance of this law. The participants mentioned that they are afraid this law won't be enforced given no budget has been allocated to do so.

For example, one of the participants, a 51-year-old, stated:

The government doesn't give us any attention. Yazidi don't work in prominent positions. This means that the government doesn't recognise the Yazidi. The government marginalise the Yazidi.

Another of the men, a 50-year-old man from Bashiqa, saw the government as central to solving the Yazidi community's problems:

If the government focuses on justice for Yazidi, all the problems will be solved. There will be equality.

3.2.11 Harassment

The women expressed how they deal with harassment issues to a great extent, especially verbal harassment. The women in the FGDs gave the following as some examples of the verbal harassment they experience: 'Can I get your number, pretty girl?', 'What a sexy girl!', 'You are sexy!', 'Could you come to my home, sexy girl?', in addition to words that are full of sexual connotations. The women also recognised harassment as one of the difficult matters non-Yazidi women have to deal with in wider Iraqi society. However, they pointed to the specific harassment that Yazidi women are subjected to because they do not wear the hijab. They felt this was especially the case when they went to the market in Mosul. They are subjected to harassment and disturbance because of clothes that differ from the clothes of Muslim women, and therefore this harassment is unique to Yazidi women.

Also, Yazidi women in universities are subjected to harassment because of their clothes. An absence of a veil or headscarf is considered a sin from the perspective of Muslim women. Muslim women think that Yazidi women should have to cover their hair. They also think that modern clothes and trousers shouldn't be worn. For example, a 22-year-old female student from Bahzani shared how she was,

expelled from the lecture because of the clothes I was wearing and subjected to clear harassment. When I asked what was the reason for my expulsion from the lecture, he told me, 'The reason [is] the clothes being indecent in my opinion'. But I was wearing very modest clothes.

Despite wearing modest clothing, Yazidi women are exposed to constant threats in their daily lives. Participants explained how this difference in clothing identifies them as Yazidis, which has an impact on how they are treated in day-to-day interactions. For example, one of the women talked about a time she went to the market in Mosul:

When we entered one of the stores, the price was changed.

She explained that this was because they knew they were Yazidis through the clothes they were wearing.

The male participants did not identify harassment – verbal or otherwise – as a problem they face.

3.2.12 Racism

Racism, in this context, was understood by the participants as a practice that is based on persecuting and marginalising people and groups because of the colour of their skin, their religion, or their culture. Racism is the origin of many other problems. If this discrimination disappeared, there wouldn't be problems among people who belong to different religions. Yazidi women and men wouldn't be exposed to bullying and killing. The reason behind this destruction is racism.

One of the women, a 52-year-old housewife from Bashiqa, articulated this belief in the following way:

From my perspective, I think that absence of rights is due to the inequality between people. If all are treated as Iraqi regardless of their religion, we would get our rights without discrimination or racism.

She was joined by another woman, a 40-year-old housewife from Bashiqa, who felt that ensuring other people knew of the Yazidi's plight would help them to achieve equality:

We want to deliver our voices to the whole world. The world should know that Yazidi are the people who [were] exposed to oppression, displacement, racism, violence. We want to get our rights like other people.

The Yazidi have rights to freedom, education, and employment. They suffer in employment, in the market, and in medical centres. Wherever there is a Yazidi, there is discrimination and racism because Yazidi are seen by the Muslim majority as infidels and as 'less than' because they don't have a holy book.

3.2.13 Military services

In this aspect, the participation of women was non-existent regarding military service. In the past, Yazidi men were subjected to discrimination while performing military service due to lack of knowledge and awareness of the Yazidi religion. At that time, there was very little awareness of the Yazidi religion, and men were suffering a lot because of harassment. The myth previously mentioned, about Yazidis having tails, was creating a false stereotype of the Yazidi religion. For example, some soldiers had a sensitivity to eating with the Yazidis. They did not agree to sit with the Yazidis because of their religion. They believed that they were infidels, and they called them these names constantly.

The men explained how this discrimination affected the roles they were given and the positions they were distributed in during the war. Yazidi men were given dangerous positions on the battlefield, positions that were considered almost impossible to survive in. Fear controlled them all, which led some men to leave their work in the service. However, they were then subjected to legal proceedings and torture due to their refusal to serve.

3.2.14 Clothing

Yazidi traditional clothing is considered one of the most beautiful kinds of clothing and is famous in the community. In the past, this clothing was also a subject of ridicule, which affected the psyche of Yazidi women, as the ones who wear this traditional clothing. The traditional clothing is part of the Yazidi heritage, and most Yazidi women willingly wear this clothing for Yazidi occasions and feasts. This is why this issue was only highlighted by female participants.

Clothing links heavily to the issue of harassment, as explored earlier in this report. This is because Yazidi women's clothing makes them easily identifiable as Yazidis to non-Yazidi people. For example, one of the women, a housewife aged 52 from Bashiqa, shared how,

women do not have complete freedom in terms of clothing, when we go to Mosul and do not wear the hijab, and our clothes are not like theirs. In this case, we will be subjected to great discrimination and often verbal harassment from women and men of Muslim majority. Muslim men say inappropriate words to us. Women say, 'May God forgive us', when they see the Yazidi women without veil. Just because we are Yazidi women and they impose customs and traditions contrary to ours.

However, the women also discussed how their clothing is a subject of discussion and discrimination within their own community. For example, one of the women, a 38-year-old widow and housewife from Bashiqa, explained how,

our clothes as [Yazidis] were distinctive, but over time the clothes differed for the middle-aged group. When Yazidi society notices that women of middle or above-average age wear clothes that are different from their old clothes, they criticise them. Especially for widowed women as they are observed by the whole community, they are subjected to criticism, and I say this from experience because I am a widowed woman, so I am subjected to criticism.

A Yazidi widow is not allowed to wear coloured clothes after the death of her husband. She doesn't go out alone as she doesn't have a man. If she went out alone, this means that she wants to remarry and this isn't acceptable in the Yazidi community. If she has children, she has to stay with her children forever without a husband. If she wants to get married, the family of her ex-husband would take the children. This is why the widow is oppressed and she can't work.

It is clear from these examples that clothing links strongly to freedom; both the freedom to wear what they want and the freedom to travel and move about safely in public spaces. For example, one woman, a 40-year-old housewife from Bashiqa, shared her experience from two days prior:

We went to Mosul for shopping and because we were wearing the Yazidi dress, although our clothes were modest, but their view of us remains the same as their view of an outcast. In addition to the verbal abuse against us, and because of that, we did not feel safe and comfortable there, only because we are Yazidi women and we have no other place nearby to go and shop. We had to go to Mosul to shop. And there we are exposed to some situations that we face because we are Yazidis, not all of course.

Here we see gender and religious discrimination meet. Nevertheless, despite this marginalisation, many Yazidi women still feel pride in the Yazidi clothing, and see it as an important way to preserve tradition. One of the women, a 22-year-old housewife from Bahzani, explained how,

the Yazidi dress is one of the elements of the Yazidi identity that our mothers wear, and in the recent period, the Yazidi women's wearing of the Yazidi dress has increased on religious occasions in Bashiqa. [Although they can't go out of Bashiqa wearing this dress for risk of harassment. Only the old women can dress in the traditional Yazidi dresses.] The Yazidi costume consists of a dress or skirt with a loose shirt with a fez that resembles a [hat]. In the past, this uniform was exclusively white, which symbolises humanity, coexistence, and tolerance over time. The colour has changed for some women. Here, we say that the Yazidi heritage clothing must be preserved because it reflects a beautiful image of the community, but the type of distinction and verbal harassment that Yazidi women were exposed to because of the clothing was a lot.

3.2.15 Orphan care

Caring for orphans was the last issue identified by the participants, and again, it was one that only the women identified because this issue is the responsibility of women rather than men. When the husband dies, the woman is the one who is responsible for caring for her orphan children. When discussing orphan care, participants were referring to protecting orphans by not allowing them to be exposed to discriminatory and sensitive situations. There is no governmental law that protects orphans or allocates a small amount of money to them. On the contrary, they are subjected to bullying and to the worst types of mistreatment. In the Yazidi context, orphans include those who have lost fathers, not only children who have lost both parents. The Yazidi orphan child is forced to leave school and work to earn his living.

One of the women, a 36-year-old mother, widow, and housewife from Bahzani, shared that she does not have a salary or social care to take care of her orphaned children:

Despite this thing, but I prefer to stay in Iraq among my family and friends, as they did not fail me and always help me. But I do not accept living all my life on charity [zakat]. The only thing I ask for is a monthly salary so that I can take care of my children and provide them with the requirements of life.

The deceased husband's family treats the widow well if they love her. However, there are some exceptions, where the deceased husband's family don't visit or deal with the widow as they don't care for her. Thus, we see that the care given to widows and orphans by Yazidi society is dependent on the feelings and whims of her in-laws.

3.3 Priority needs for the community

Section 3.2 outlined the many threats and challenges Yazidi women face as a result of their religion and gender. These cause problems for the whole Yazidi community and pose a danger in the future. Threats were arranged according to the participants' choice. The needs of the area were addressed; they were many, and all were important points in the interest of the Yazidi community.

The first is education. In the field of education, there is real discrimination among the people of the Bashiqa area, due to the absence of universities and institutes there. It is noted that the closest university to Bashiqa district is the University of Mosul. The University of Mosul is considered to be one of the biggest and most famous universities but, because they are Yazidis, they have many fears in studying at this university. The

Yazidi young man or woman, no matter how successful they are, does not receive sufficient support from the university administration. Rather, the administration would prefer people of another religion over them. They also can't study in Erbil or Dohuk because of language. Therefore, the future is unknown to many students, and this constitutes a threat to their academic life.

Moreover, in the field of school curricula, there is a clear threat that exists among the Yazidi minority due to the failure to include religious curricula that stipulate the customs and traditions of the religion and to present them to all grades up to the preparatory stage. As described by one of the men, a 35-year-old from Bashiqa, when discussing religious issues, there must be

books on the Yazidi religion in order to reduce this false stereotype about the Yazidi religion. Religious speeches should not aim at tearing the social fabric. Therefore, there must be laws that support journalistic work and stress this type of speech, and the media must be highlighted as the fourth authority and a means of pressure on the parties that broadcast hate speeches.

For Yazidi women specifically, young Yazidi women say that some girls who wear the hijab do not talk to them in education settings. They call them infidels and other offensive words. They violate their rights. Some of the young women in the FGDs said that they were also discriminated against by university professors. Young Yazidi women said that they are suffering because they are graduates. They do not find any job opportunities and they cannot go to Mosul and work there because of the fear of terrorism and the lack of security and safety. They are also afraid of the discrimination and racism they are exposed to there. At the same time, poverty is an issue. Families can't send two children at the same time to school because they can't afford it, so they prefer to send males to school and force girls to drop out.

In the field of health, the area also lacks many health services, a private hospital, and even maternity halls for women, and this poses a great threat to the life of this poor class. There is also discrimination by the Iraqi Ministry of Health through not building a hospital in the area. This also affects the budget of the Yazidi citizens, given that the nearest hospital is in Mosul, while Yazidis also fear travelling to Mosul due to the discrimination they face. One of the participants said in the session that she had lost confidence in the treatment that she had taken from the doctor because he had discriminated against her as a Yazidi woman.

In the field of unemployment, the lack of job opportunities poses a great threat to the future of youth and women in the region. Participants were clear that there are people in Bashiqa who won't allow their daughters to go to Mosul to work because of fear. Young Yazidi women cannot go to other cities because the customs and traditions control them and prevent them from being able to travel alone. Therefore, one of the most important needs of the Yazidi girls is to find job opportunities in a place where there is no fear or racism. They need to realise their rights at schools, universities, and in work. They need to feel safe and secure and not be afraid of others.

As for adult women, their chances of working are almost non-existent for several reasons, including that they were unable to complete their studies because of the circumstances they were exposed to. They are controlled by fear that people may talk about them. There is no way to communicate. Yazidi women were raised with fear that others may know that they are Yazidi so they may be exposed to bullying, verbal harassment or sexual assault.

In the area of the return of ISIS families, this matter constitutes a serious and clear threat to the future of the region and to the psychology of the people, and a lack of consideration for their feelings and fairness.

In terms of legislation, within the framework of the Iraqi Constitution, Article 26 (second paragraph) of the new Unified National Card Law, constitutes a major threat to the Yazidi community, which will have influence (HHRO 2022). Additionally, it is necessary to work on legislative reform in Iraq to protect minorities, and to guarantee their full rights.

As for the basic needs of women, which is to provide an appropriate environment in which there is neither discrimination nor racism, young Yazidi women are subjected to verbal harassment whenever they go to Mosul because they do not wear the hijab. Women also said that there is no support from the government or from non-governmental organisations, so they are unable to realise all of their rights.

For the widowed and divorced women in Yazidi society, they have lost all their rights in everything. They cannot work, study, or feel safe and secure. They cannot provide a living for their children. Iraqi and Yazidi society view them as prey and not as women. They are trying hard to get rid of this restriction and 'get out of their shells', but they cannot. Today, widowed and divorced women are only looking for an opportunity to work, but unfortunately there is none because of their circumstances. This is particularly difficult for them when they have orphaned children to provide for. The Iraqi

government must provide means to protect orphans and preserve their future, as well as to allocate them study seats or scholarships for university, as well as schools. There must be allocations for orphans so they are not left without care and social security. Also, the government must protect orphans by granting small projects for them to earn a living or have a livelihood. This study suggests that widowed and divorced women are the women most in need of opportunities to be able to work, study, go shopping, and access their natural rights.

4 Conclusion

It is difficult to live in a society that views women as victims and considers them to be unfit to work in all areas of employment. The Yazidi woman suffers in earning a living, finding work, leaving the home and travelling, so that she is unable to practise her skills and traditions in full freedom and comfort. This research has found that even studying poses a great challenge for Yazidi women compared to women from the Muslim majority. Minority women suffer from not realising their full rights to study because the higher seats are for the women of the majority. Some women even shared their experiences of discrimination in hospitals. In some cases, but not all, other women are preferred over Yazidi women.

Through this research, Yazidi women's fear of realising their rights and expressing their opinions freely and comfortably has been revealed. A Yazidi woman is always subject to misunderstanding and always has to justify her life. Through the FGD sessions conducted for this research, Yazidi women revealed that they lack basic security and safety in Iraqi society.

5 Recommendations

Recommendations to improve these conditions are as follows:

- The provision of a greater number of workshops to strengthen Yazidi women's self-confidence. This would help them to take agency and make the decisions that they want, not what the community wants. A greater number of sessions could be conducted to strengthen their attitudes towards study, work, or travel. This should be accompanied by education for Yazidi men that challenges their perceptions of Yazidi women and the restrictions placed on them.

- Moreover, it is necessary to provide job opportunities for divorced and widowed women, because their chances are nil in life, and they must be strengthened, whether at work or regarding self-reliance. Today, there is no governmental support that provides for them and they must depend on what the people of the area donate or financial provision from the government, which is not enough to even buy vegetables monthly. Therefore, they must rely on themselves.
- Furthermore, job opportunities must be provided within the region because it is very difficult to find a job opportunity outside of Bashiqa, as women cannot travel alone and don't have the courage to live in a house alone. Unemployment today is much higher than it was before.
- The Yazidi women reported that they need medical complexes or hospitals because Bashiqa has many doctors but there is no hospital or medical complex. It is therefore very important to provide a hospital.
- The Yazidi women also said that they need to be better taken care of in all aspects, whether that is in education, health, work, travel or visiting the market. All Yazidi women need to feel comfortable, safe, and secure to be able take a step forwards.

Yazidi women have endured severe suffering. They have lost all their opportunities in all areas of society. It is imperative that they are supported and empowered to realise their rights like all women around the world.

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Annexe 1 – Women’s participatory ranking

Women’s ranking	Problem	Age group	No. of votes as top priority	The equation	Result
1	Education	20–35 years 50 years (one vote) 42 years (one vote)	10	$10*12+6*11+1*10+1*9+1*8+2*7+1*4+4*1$	235
2	Freedom	40–50 years 36 years (one vote)	4	$4*12+4*11+3*10+1*9+3*8+1*7+1*5+3*4+1*3+11*2+3*1$	207

3	Health	40–50 years 21 years (one vote)	4	$4*12+5*11+4*10+2*9+1*8+2*7+1*6+2*4+3*1$	200
4	Safety and security	28–38 years	5	$5*12+3*11+3*10+1*9+4*8+1*7+2*5+1*3+1*2+5*1$	191
5	Unemployment			$1*11+3*10+2*9+1*8+3*6+3*5+2*4+1*3+2*2+5*1$	120
6	Legal rights			$1*11+1*10+1*8+3*7+1*6+4*5+7*4+1*3+3*2+3*1$	116
7	Language			$1*11+2*10+1*9+5*8+1*6+1*5+1*4+3*3+3*2+2*1$	112
8	Verbal harassment	36 years	1	$1*12+1*11+2*9+1*8+2*7+4*6+1*4+2*3+4*2+6*1$	111
9	Racism			$3*10+4*9+1*8+1*6+2*5+4*4+2*2$	110

10	Clothes and restraint	44 years	1	$1*12+2*9+2*7+3*6+3*3+4*2+5*1$	84
11	Transportation			$2*9+2*7+1*5+1*4+2*3+3*2$	53
12	Not taking care of orphans	39 years	1	$1*12+1*7+1*4+2*3+4*2+3*1$	40

Annexe 2 – Men’s participatory ranking

Men’s ranking	Problem	Age group	No. of votes as top priority	The equation	Results
1	Religious discrimination	20–56 years	11	$11*9+3*8+4*7+2*6+2*4+1*3+1*1$	175
2	Education	41–51 years	5	$5*9+3*8+2*7+1*6+2*5+4*4+1*3+6*1$	124
3	Unemployment			$5*8+4*7+3*6+1*5+2*4+3*3+3*2$	114
4	Government role	45 years 28 years	2	$2*9+3*8+2*7+3*6+3*5+3*4+1*3+1*2+6*1$	112

5	Health	22 years 42 years	2	$2^9+2^8+1^7+2^6+3^5+2^4+3^3+4^*2+4^*1$	97
6	Legal rights			$1^8+2^6+5^5+4^4+7^3+4^2$	90
7	Mobility/ transportation			$3^8+3^7+2^6+3^4+2^3+4^2+4^*1$	87
8	Safety and security	20–30 years	2	$2^9+1^8+1^7+3^6+1^5+3^4+2^3+5^*2+2^*1$	86
9	Military service	22 years 51 years	2	$2^9+2^8+2^7+2^6+2^5+2^3+3^2+4^*1$	86



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