The Yezidis of Afrin Before 2010: A Socio-Historical Overview

I. Introduction

A. Contextualizing the Yezidis and the Afrin Region

The Yezidis represent an ancient ethno-religious community, primarily indigenous to the Kurdistan region spanning parts of modern-day Iraq, Syria, Turkey, and Iran, with historical communities also present in the Caucasus.[1] They are predominantly speakers of Kurmanji, a northern dialect of Kurdish [3], although some communities, like those historically in Bashiqa and Bahzani near Mosul, adopted Arabic.[4] Their distinct syncretic faith blends elements traceable to ancient Iranian religions, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Nestorian Christianity, and Islam, particularly Sufism.[1] Central tenets revolve around a belief in one God and seven divine beings, chief among them Malak Ṭāʾūs (the Peacock Angel), venerated as God's primary emissary.[1] The tomb of the 12th-century Sufi reformer Sheikh Adi ibn Musafir, located in Lalish, northern Iraq, serves as the faith's holiest site and primary pilgrimage destination.[1]
Historically, Yezidis have faced recurrent persecution, often accused of heresy or "devil-worship" by neighboring Abrahamic faiths, contributing to a long history of massacres and displacement.[1] Despite periods of peaceful coexistence with Sunni Muslim neighbors [5], this history of persecution has profoundly shaped Yezidi social structures and collective memory.
The Afrin district, known historically also as Kurd Dagh (Mountain of the Kurds) or Jebel Akrad, occupies the northwestern corner of Syria, sharing a significant border with Turkey.[10] Prior to the widespread conflict that engulfed Syria from 2011 onwards, Afrin was distinguished as one of Syria's most homogeneously Kurdish regions.[10] Estimates suggested Kurds constituted upwards of 90-97% of the population.[10] Unlike the northeastern Kurdish regions of Jazira and Kobani (Ain al-Arab), Afrin had experienced comparatively less intensive state-sponsored Arabization campaigns before the 21st century [11], although it was not entirely immune to such policies.[10] The region's economy was heavily reliant on agriculture, particularly the cultivation of olives and the production of olive oil [10], with the major city of Aleppo serving as its primary economic and cultural hub.[17] Afrin was home not only to a Sunni Muslim Kurdish majority but also to minority communities, including Yezidis, Alevis, and Christians.[10]

B. Report Scope and Objectives

This report provides a comprehensive examination of the Yezidi community *specifically within the Afrin district of Syria* during the historical period *prior to the year 2010*. The objective is to establish a detailed baseline understanding of their situation before the profound

transformations brought by the Syrian Civil War and subsequent military interventions. The analysis focuses on several key thematic areas: the historical roots and settlement patterns of Yezidis in Afrin, their demographic profile and social structure, prevailing economic conditions, their socio-political status under successive Syrian governments, and the nature of their local cultural and religious life as practiced within the Afrin context.

This study adheres to specific parameters. It deliberately excludes detailed analysis of events occurring after 2010, such as the rise of extremist groups, Turkish military operations, or the large-scale displacement of the Yezidi population from Afrin. Furthermore, it refrains from offering a general theological treatise on Yezidism, focusing instead on religious and cultural aspects pertinent to the community *in Afrin* during the specified timeframe. While the socio-political realities discussed inevitably touch upon the community's rights and experiences of discrimination, the report avoids structuring its analysis around a dedicated human rights framework, instead integrating these aspects within the broader socio-political context. The findings presented are based exclusively on the information contained within the provided research documentation.[2]

II. Historical Roots and Settlement Patterns in the Afrin Region (Pre-2010)

A. Ancient Presence and Historical Migrations

Evidence points to a long and continuous Yezidi presence in the Afrin region, encompassing the Kurd Dagh and the adjacent Jebel Sim'an area, extending back at least to the 12th or 13th centuries.[14] This timeframe aligns with the formative period of Yezidism associated with Sheikh Adi ibn Musafir, who settled in the Lalish valley in the 12th century.[1] The landscape of Afrin itself bears witness to this deep history through numerous ancient monuments, shrines (ziyarat), and cemeteries that served as focal points for the community over centuries.[2]

Historically, the Afrin area held significance within the broader Yezidi administrative and spiritual geography. Yezidi tradition speaks of a division of their territory into seven administrative centers, each associated with a sacred bronze peacock effigy known as a Tawis or Sincaq.[5] The region encompassing Aleppo and Afrin was designated as one of these centers, known as *Tawisa Helebê* (The Peacock/Sincaq of Aleppo).[5] This designation underscores Afrin's historical integration into the wider network of Yezidi communities and its connection to the spiritual heartland in Shekhan and Lalish, from which religious figures like the Qewals (reciters of sacred hymns) would periodically travel.[5]

The Yezidi population in Afrin was also shaped by migration dynamics over centuries. Persecution and socio-economic pressures in Anatolia (modern-day Turkey) likely prompted waves of Yezidis to move south into Syria, including the Afrin region.[6] By the 20th century, the Yezidi population in Turkey had dramatically declined, with many relocating to Syria, Europe, or the Caucasus.[6] Specific instances, such as Yezidi refugees fleeing the Qara Dagh area and subsequently founding new villages like Qestel Cindo, Sankle, Baflon, and Qatmeh in Afrin, illustrate this process.[2]

The period of the French Mandate over Syria (1920-1946) represented a relative interlude of greater openness for Afrin's Yezidis. During this time, authorities permitted them a degree of freedom to express their identity, allowing the establishment of a Yezidi school and, significantly, the inclusion of "Yezidi" as a religious affiliation on official identity documents.[2] The first formal census and registration specifically identifying Yezidis in Syria reportedly took place in the Afrin region in 1932.[2] This brief window of recognition, however, would contrast sharply with the policies implemented after Syrian independence.

B. Settlement Distribution and Village Identification

Prior to 2010, the Yezidi community in Afrin was not dispersed evenly throughout the district but tended to reside in specific clusters of villages. These concentrations were particularly noted in the southern and eastern sub-districts [10], as well as in the area stretching between the town of Afrin and Mount Simon (Jebel Sim'an/Mount Liloon) to the south.[2]

A striking historical trend is the significant reduction in the number of Yezidi settlements over time. One source indicates that whereas approximately 85 villages in Afrin were identified as Yezidi in 1935, this number had dwindled to between 23 and 33 by a later date, likely before the major conflict erupted post-2010.[19] Another account suggests there were 58 Yezidi villages at the start of the 20th century, but by the period immediately preceding the 2018 Turkish intervention, Yezidis were primarily living in around 22 mixed villages alongside presence in Afrin city center.[20] This dramatic decline over the course of the 20th century points towards long-term pressures predating the Syrian Civil War. Factors contributing to this erosion likely included historical persecution [3], campaigns of Islamization (sometimes forced, sometimes pragmatic conversions for security or privilege) [2], economic hardship driving emigration [17], and potentially discriminatory state policies that undermined the viability of minority villages. This shrinking geographic footprint signifies a community under duress, losing ground long before the large-scale displacements of the 21st century.

Based on the available documentation, several villages and settlements in the Afrin district were identified as having a significant Yezidi presence before 2010. Consolidating this information provides a clearer picture of their geographic distribution:

Table 1: Documented Yezidi Villages and Religious Sites in Afrin District (Pre-2010)

Village Name	Subdistrict (if known)	Known Associated Sites (Pre-2010)	Source(s)
Ali Qena	Shara (Shkak)		[2]
Ashkan Sharqi	Jindires		[2]
Ba'aye (Baadi)	Sherawa (Mount Liloon)		[2]
Baflon (Baflun)	Shara (Shkak)	Settled by Qara Dagh refugees; mentioned as Yezidi village	[2]
Barad	Sherawa (Mount		[22]

	Liloon)		
Basufan (Bosoufane)	Sherawa (Mount Liloon)	Sheikh Ali Shrine	[2]
Burj Abdallah (Burj Abdalo)	Sherawa (Mount Liloon)		[2]
Faqira (Feqira)	Jindires	Sheikh Junaid Shrine	[2]
Ghazzawiya (Ghazaiwiye)	Sherawa (Mount Liloon)		[2]
Iska	Sherawa (Mount Liloon)		[2]
Jaqla	Jindires		[2]
Jindires (Town/Center)	Jindires	Presence noted	[2]
Kafr Jannah (Kafr Jana)	Sharran	Sacred tree near Hawker shrine (Qara Jarneh); Arab settlement noted later	[2]
Kafr Nabu		Identified as location of a former Yezidi temple	[2]
Kafr Zait (Al-Bir / Kafr Zita)	Jindires	Noted presence of Sheikhs and Mirids	[2]
Kila	Jindires		[2]
Kimar	Sherawa (Mount Liloon)		[2]
Qara Jarneh		Hawker Shrine (frequented by Yezidis from Kafr Jannah)	[2]
Qatmeh	Shara (Shkak)	Settled by Qara Dagh refugees; Arab settlement noted later	[2]
Qajuma	Jindires		[2]
Qestel Cindo (Qastal Jindo)	Shara (Shkak)	Sheikh Hamid Shrine & Cemetery; Settled by Qara Dagh refugees; Attacked 2013; Arab settlement noted later	[2]
Qibar	Sherawa (Mount Liloon)	Jill Khanna Shrine	[2]
Sankle (Sinka)	Shara (Shkak)	Settled by Qara Dagh refugees; Arab settlement noted later	[2]

Shadere (shaderê)	Sherawa (Mount Liloon)		[2]
Ain Dara (Andara)	Sherawa (Mount Liloon)		[2]
Trindeh	Sherawa (Mount Liloon)		[2]
Other Villages	*Various*	Approx. 15-19 shrines existed across Afrin/Jebel Sim'an region	[14]

Note: This table consolidates information from various sources. Village names may have variations in spelling. Subdistrict associations are based on available information. The list may not be exhaustive.

III. Demographics, Social Structure, and Economy (Pre-2010)

A. Population Estimates and Demographic Trends

Establishing a precise figure for the Yezidi population in the Afrin district before 2010 is fraught with difficulty due to a lack of reliable official data and significant variations among available estimates. Syrian state censuses historically did not collect or publish data based on ethnic or religious affiliation [11], rendering official counts non-existent.[6] Consequently, population figures rely on estimates provided by community leaders, researchers, or non-governmental organizations, which often differ substantially.

Available pre-2010/pre-2011 estimates for Afrin's Yezidi population range widely:

- **5,000 – 15,000:** Cited in a 2019 analysis referencing the pre-war period.[14]
- **20,000 – 30,000:** Mentioned in a 2020 report referring to the population before the Turkish occupation.[22]
- **~50,000:** An estimate provided in a 2022 report describing the pre-conflict population.[2]
- **~60,000:** Attributed to a Yezidi leader from Afrin, Sileman Cafer, referring to the period before 2011.[19] Another source mentions 50,000-60,000 before 2011.[20]

This significant discrepancy underscores the community's marginalized status and the consequences of the Syrian state's policy of non-recognition. The state's refusal to enumerate its Yezidi citizens rendered them statistically invisible, forcing reliance on less precise methods that could be influenced by differing definitions, timeframes, or even the political aims of the estimators. This ambiguity itself is a reflection of the Yezidis' precarious position within Syrian society prior to 2010.

Within the broader demographic context of Afrin, the Yezidi community constituted a distinct religious minority within an overwhelmingly Kurdish ethnic region. As noted, estimates placed the Kurdish proportion of Afrin's population at 90-97% before the war [10], with only small Arab and Turkmen minorities, primarily concentrated in specific villages.[11] The nearby metropolis of

Aleppo hosted a large Kurdish population, significantly augmented over decades by rural-to-urban migration from areas including Afrin.[17] Yezidis likely participated in this migration, although their specific numbers within Aleppo's Kurdish community are difficult to ascertain from the provided materials.

B. Social Organization

Yezidi society traditionally adheres to a hierarchical caste system, dividing the community into three main hereditary groups: Sheikhs (religious leaders), Pirs (elders/lesser religious figures), and Murids (laity).[1] This structure is intrinsically linked to strict rules of endogamy, which mandate marriage only within the Yezidi community and, traditionally, within one's own caste.[1] Those who marry outside the faith are typically considered to have left the community.[5] These practices are fundamental to maintaining community boundaries and preserving religious purity, particularly vital for a non-proselytizing religion [2] that has faced centuries of external pressure and persecution. While this system was foundational, there are hints that its application might have seen some local adaptation in Afrin; one source suggests that marriages to non-Yezidi Kurds were sometimes permitted [20], potentially indicating a degree of flexibility or assimilation pressure within the specific context of Afrin, contrasting with the generally strict rules documented elsewhere.[5]

While Kurdish society in general historically placed importance on tribal structures led by Sheikhs or Agas [1], sources suggest that tribal identity and organization were comparatively weaker in the Afrin region (Kurd Dagh) than in other Kurdish areas of Syria like the Jazira.[17] Within the Afrin Yezidi community itself, traditional leadership structures appear to have undergone erosion. One report notes that by the early 20th century, many Yezidi Aghas (local notables or leaders) had converted to Islam, often in exchange for privileges or security, leaving the community in a weakened state without strong unified leadership, a situation persisting into the pre-2011 period.[2]

The relationship between Afrin's Yezidis and the surrounding Sunni Kurdish majority was complex. They shared the Kurmanji language [2] and inhabited the same geographic space. However, Yezidism's distinct religious tenets and history set them apart. Broader historical narratives document instances of persecution of Yezidis by Muslim Kurds, particularly after the Islamization of various Kurdish tribes.[3] Yet, within the specific context of Afrin before 2010, sources also point towards patterns of generally peaceful coexistence.[20] Evidence of syncretic practices, such as the shared use of certain shrines by both Yezidis and local Muslims, further complicates the picture.[14] This suggests that local dynamics in Afrin may have fostered a degree of mutual accommodation, possibly influenced by shared Sufi traditions prevalent in the region [14] or the legacy of past conversions blurring communal lines.[14] Nonetheless, the fundamental religious difference, coupled with the historical baggage of conflict and the state's discriminatory policies towards both Kurds and non-Muslims, placed Yezidis in a unique and potentially vulnerable position – effectively a 'minority within a minority'.[27]

C. Economic Life

The economy of the Afrin region, and thus for most of its Yezidi inhabitants, was predominantly agrarian before 2010. Olive cultivation, harvesting, and the production of olive oil were central economic activities, with Aleppo serving as the main market for these products.[10]

A common pattern involved labor migration from the rural villages of Afrin to the city of Aleppo. Men would seek work, often in manual labor sectors, returning to their villages periodically, such as on weekends or, crucially, for the intensive olive harvest season.[17] While not explicitly detailing Yezidi participation, it is highly probable they were part of this labor flow, given their integration into the region's socio-economic fabric.

Land tenure presented significant challenges. There are indications of a legacy of feudal-like social structures within some Yezidi communities, not just in Afrin but more broadly, where land ownership became concentrated in the hands of a few powerful families, often traditional leaders like Mukhtars or Aghas who were better positioned to navigate the bureaucracy of the modern state.[21] This historical pattern could leave a substantial portion of the community as landless peasants, farming land owned by others in return for a share of the harvest.[21] This internal dynamic was compounded by external pressures from Syrian state policies. As a border region, Afrin was subject to specific laws restricting the ability of residents, particularly Kurds, to buy, sell, build upon, or even inherit land and property.[16] Obtaining official property deeds (*Tabu Akhdar*) was reported to be extremely difficult for Kurds in these areas.[16] This legal insecurity surrounding land ownership created significant economic vulnerability for Afrin's Yezidis, potentially limiting opportunities, encouraging out-migration, and possibly contributing to assimilation pressures as individuals sought greater security. The combination of potentially unequal internal land distribution and discriminatory state policies created a precarious economic foundation for many Yezidis in Afrin before 2010.

IV. Socio-Political Environment under Syrian Rule (Pre-2010)

A. Legal Status and State Recognition

A defining feature of the Yezidi experience in Syria before 2010 was the consistent refusal of the state to grant them official recognition as an independent religious group.[2] Under the Ba'athist regime, and even preceding it, state ideology centered on pan-Arabism, which actively suppressed or denied the distinct identities of ethnic and religious minorities.[16] In official records, such as identity cards and civil registers, Yezidis were systematically registered as Muslims.[2]

This legally mandated misidentification had profound practical consequences. Yezidis were unable to assert their identity legally in official contexts. Crucially, matters of personal status – including marriage, divorce, and inheritance – were governed by Islamic Sharia courts and law, a framework incompatible with Yezidi religious tenets and social customs.[2] This forced Yezidis into a legal structure that denied the reality of their religious affiliation and created significant hurdles in fundamental life events. Furthermore, this lack of recognition translated

into political disenfranchisement, with Yezidis having no designated representation in local administrative councils.[2]
This situation stood in stark contrast to the brief period during the French Mandate (1920-1946), particularly in Afrin, where authorities had allowed Yezidis to be identified as such on official documents.[2] The post-independence Syrian state, driven by its nationalist ideology, deliberately reversed this limited recognition, actively working to erase Yezidi identity from the legal and administrative landscape. This policy of legal non-existence was a cornerstone of their marginalization prior to 2010, creating deep-seated practical difficulties and reinforcing their status as an unrecognized and unprotected minority.

B. Ba'athist Policies and Restrictions

The Ba'athist party's rule, particularly from 1970 onwards, intensified the pressure on Syria's minorities through policies aimed at enforcing Arab nationalist conformity.[16] Yezidis in Afrin experienced a range of restrictions, many overlapping with those imposed on the broader Kurdish population, but with added dimensions related to their distinct religious identity:

- **Religious Practice:** Public celebration of key Yezidi religious holidays, such as *Charshama Sor* (Red Wednesday, the Yezidi New Year), was prohibited.[19] The use of distinct Yezidi religious symbols on gravestones was also banned, forcing families to conform to Islamic burial norms or risk state sanction.[2]
- **Education:** Yezidi children attending state schools were compelled to participate in mandatory Islamic religious education classes.[2] This policy directly undermined the transmission of Yezidi beliefs and subjected children to the doctrines of a different faith. Furthermore, in legal settings, Yezidis were required to swear oaths on the Qur'an.[19]
- **Language:** The state's suppression of the Kurdish language directly impacted Yezidis, for whom Kurmanji (often referred to by Yezidis as *Êzdîkî*) is the primary language of religious transmission and daily life.[2] Restrictions included bans on giving children Kurdish names and limitations on speaking Kurdish even in private ceremonies or cultural gatherings.[10]
- **Cultural Expression:** A general atmosphere of political repression discouraged any public expression of non-Arab, non-state-sanctioned identities.[14] This created an environment where practicing Yezidi culture and religion openly was risky and often forced into the private sphere or conducted with great secrecy.[2]

These policies constituted a systematic effort by the Ba'athist state to suppress core elements of Yezidi identity. The interference extended beyond mere non-recognition into active attempts to control religious education, curtail ritual practice, restrict language use, and erase public symbols of Yezidi distinctiveness. The objective appeared to be the assimilation or neutralization of minority identities perceived as challenging the dominant Arab nationalist narrative. This pervasive suppression shaped the daily lives and choices of Yezidis in Afrin throughout this period.

C. Land and Property Rights in a Border Region

Afrin's location along the sensitive border with Turkey made it subject to specific state policies aimed at controlling land ownership and demographics in strategic areas.[10] Beginning as early as 1952 and continuing with varying intensity up to 2011, Syrian governments implemented decrees that restricted the rights of residents in designated border zones to build, transfer, improve, or freely transact land and property.[16] Decree 49 of 2008, for instance, reinforced prohibitions on property transactions within 25 kilometers of the international border without explicit permission from the central government – permission reported to be almost systematically denied to Kurds.[16]

These policies, framed under the guise of national security, disproportionately affected the Kurdish inhabitants of border regions like Afrin.[16] As Yezidis constituted a part of Afrin's Kurdish population, they were directly impacted by these restrictions. Obtaining official title deeds (*Tabu Akhdar*) for homes and land became exceedingly difficult, leaving many residents in a state of legal limbo regarding their property rights and creating significant insecurity of tenure.[16] This legal vulnerability made them susceptible to future disputes or dispossession.

These land policies should be understood within the broader context of the Syrian state's efforts to manage the "Kurdish issue" and, in some areas, alter the demographic balance through Arabization.[16] While Afrin was less affected by large-scale resettlement programs like the "Arab Belt" in Jazira, historical instances of resettling Arab families (particularly during the United Arab Republic era, 1958-1961) and the Arabization of Kurdish village names did occur in Afrin.[10] Control over land served as a critical instrument of state power in these sensitive regions. For Yezidis in Afrin, this meant their ancestral connection to the land was rendered legally fragile, adding a layer of economic and existential vulnerability to the political and cultural marginalization they already faced.

D. Inter-Community Relations

The social fabric of Afrin before 2010 involved interactions between the Yezidi minority and other groups. The relationship with the Sunni Kurdish majority was, as discussed, multifaceted – characterized by shared language and ethnicity but also by religious difference and a complex history.[3]

Afrin was also home to other minority communities, notably Alevis, who were concentrated primarily in the Ma'batli sub-district and surrounding villages [10], and small Christian populations.[10] Available sources suggest that, despite the underlying political tensions and discriminatory state policies affecting all non-Arab or non-Sunni groups to varying degrees, daily life among these diverse communities in Afrin was often characterized by peaceful coexistence prior to the outbreak of widespread conflict.[20]

However, narratives of peaceful coexistence should be balanced with acknowledgements of potential social friction. One source mentions the possibility of Yezidis experiencing social inferiority or discrimination from their Muslim and Christian peers.[2] This suggests that while overt conflict might have been uncommon in daily interactions, underlying prejudices or social hierarchies could still manifest, further complicating the Yezidi position within the local social landscape.

V. Cultural and Religious Landscape in Afrin (Pre-2010)

A. Sacred Sites and Geography

Despite the repressive political climate, the Yezidi community in Afrin maintained a tangible connection to their faith through a network of sacred sites scattered across the district's landscape. These included shrines (*ziyarat*), dedicated cemeteries, and venerated natural features like sacred trees.[2] Several specific sites existing before 2010 are documented (See Table 1 above), including the Jill Khanna shrine in Qibar village, the Sheikh Hamid shrine and associated cemetery in Qestel Cindo, the Sheikh Junaid shrine in Faqira village, and the Sheikh Ali shrine in Basufan.[2] The area around the Hawker shrine in Qara Jarneh was associated with a sacred tree in nearby Kafr Jannah where worshippers tied ribbons, a common practice at Yezidi holy places symbolizing wishes or prayers.[2] Reports suggest the existence of approximately 15 to 19 such Yezidi shrines across the Afrin and adjacent Jebel Sim'an region [14], serving as vital focal points for religious observance and community identity. A former Yezidi temple was also identified in the village of Kafr Nabu.[2]

An interesting feature of Afrin's religious landscape was the syncretic use of some shrines. Certain sites were reportedly frequented not only by Yezidis but also by members of the local Muslim community.[14] This shared veneration might reflect the complex history of the region, potentially stemming from shared Sufi influences (Sufism being strong among Afrin's Kurds [14]) or the legacy of historical conversions, where formerly Yezidi sites retained significance for descendants who had adopted Islam.[14] The existence and continued use of these sites, even under duress, highlights their importance as anchors of Yezidi identity in Afrin. The shared usage points to complex local interactions and adaptations, potentially distinguishing Afrin's Yezidi experience from communities elsewhere.

B. Religious Practices and Cultural Expressions

Living under a regime that denied their identity and suppressed their practices, Yezidis in Afrin often had to observe their ancient social and religious rituals with discretion, sometimes in complete secrecy.[2] The state's prohibition on public celebrations and the general atmosphere of repression forced many aspects of religious life into the private sphere.[2]

Given the restrictions on formal religious education and the suppression or scarcity of written religious texts (like the *Mishûr* manuscripts or sacred books like the *Kitab al-Jilwa* and *Mishefa Reş*, whose authenticity is debated but reflect oral traditions [1]), oral tradition played an exceptionally crucial role.[2] Religious knowledge, hymns (*Qewls*), stories, and traditions were primarily transmitted from generation to generation through spoken word.[1] The historical tradition of *Qewals* – trained reciters who traveled from the spiritual center of Lalish to Yezidi communities, including potentially Afrin (*Tawisa Helebê*), to recite sacred texts and maintain doctrinal unity – was vital for preserving the faith in the absence of widespread literacy or formal institutions.[5]

The Kurmanji dialect of Kurdish (*Êzdîkî*) remained the bedrock of Yezidi religious and cultural

life.[2] Nearly all orally transmitted religious traditions are in Kurmanji.[5] Consequently, the Syrian state's ban on the Kurdish language directly threatened this vital aspect of their heritage, creating significant obstacles for cultural transmission and practice.[13]

Other cultural markers persisted, including adherence to specific religious taboos governing daily life (e.g., certain foods, the color blue, avoidance of the word 'Shaytan') [1] and the symbolic significance of traditional dress, particularly the color white, representing purity.[2]

Despite political borders and the difficulties imposed by the state, Afrin's Yezidis maintained a sense of connection to the broader Yezidi world, looking towards the main spiritual center of Lalish in Iraq as their ultimate religious authority and pilgrimage site.[1]

The cultural life of Yezidis in Afrin before 2010 was thus characterized by profound resilience and adaptation. Practices such as forced secrecy, heavy reliance on oral transmission, the maintenance of strict social boundaries like endogamy, and the enduring spiritual connection to Lalish served as crucial survival mechanisms. They allowed the community to sustain its core identity in the face of state policies explicitly aimed at assimilation and the erasure of their distinctiveness. Language was both a fundamental pillar of their culture and a significant point of vulnerability due to the state's anti-Kurdish policies.

C. Cultural Preservation Efforts (Pre-2010)

Formal, state-supported cultural preservation initiatives for the Yezidi community in Afrin were non-existent before 2010. The Syrian government's policies were antithetical to the preservation of minority cultures, particularly those, like the Yezidis, who were also part of the politically suspect Kurdish population.

Consequently, efforts to preserve Yezidi culture and religion were primarily community-based, informal, and often clandestine. Preservation relied heavily on the mechanisms discussed above: the intergenerational transmission of oral traditions within families and the community; the continued observance of religious rituals, albeit often privately; the maintenance of social structures like the caste system and endogamy that reinforced group identity; and the upkeep and veneration of sacred sites.[2]

The brief period under the French Mandate, which saw the establishment of a Yezidi school in Afrin [2], stands out as a rare, albeit temporary, exception where some form of institutional support for cultural transmission was permitted.

While Yezidi community organizations, such as the Yazidi House [21] and the Afrin Yazidi Union [20], emerged or became active particularly after the Syrian conflict began and the regime withdrew from Kurdish areas in 2012, there is no evidence in the provided sources to suggest that similar formal, openly operating Yezidi cultural or political organizations existed *within Afrin* before 2010. The repressive political climate under the Ba'athist regime would likely have made such open organization impossible. Similarly, international NGOs specifically focused on Yezidi welfare and rights gained significant prominence primarily in response to the ISIS genocide beginning in 2014 [28], rather than having a major operational presence focused on Afrin's Yezidis in the pre-2010 era. Preservation, therefore, was largely an internal, community-driven endeavor carried out under challenging circumstances.

VI. Conclusion

A. Synthesis of Findings

The Yezidi community of Afrin district prior to 2010 represented a long-established indigenous minority with historical roots stretching back centuries. They possessed a distinct ethno-religious identity, primarily spoke Kurmanji Kurdish, and were geographically concentrated in specific village clusters, particularly in the southern and eastern parts of the district. A network of shrines, cemeteries, and other sacred sites marked their enduring presence on the landscape, serving as vital anchors for religious practice and community identity.

However, their existence was characterized by significant ambiguity and marginalization. Accurate demographic data remains elusive due to the Syrian state's deliberate policy of non-recognition, resulting in widely varying population estimates. Legally and politically, Yezidis were invisible, denied official status as a distinct religious group and often forced to register as Muslims. This subjected them to inappropriate legal frameworks, particularly concerning personal status law, and excluded them from formal political representation.

Living under Ba'athist rule meant enduring systematic cultural and religious suppression. Restrictions on language, public celebrations, religious education, and the use of religious symbols were part of a broader state strategy aimed at enforcing Arab nationalist conformity and neutralizing minority identities. As inhabitants of a sensitive border region predominantly populated by Kurds, Afrin's Yezidis also faced specific vulnerabilities related to land and property rights, with state policies making secure tenure difficult to obtain.

Despite these profound challenges, the Yezidi community demonstrated remarkable resilience. They maintained their core religious beliefs and cultural practices, largely through the strength of oral tradition, the persistence of internal social structures like the caste system and endogamy, the continued veneration of sacred sites (sometimes in syncretic contexts), and an enduring spiritual connection to the broader Yezidi world centered on Lalish. Their pre-2010 existence was a testament to cultural tenacity in the face of sustained pressure.

B. Concluding Assessment

The Yezidis of Afrin entered the period of intense conflict and upheaval that began in Syria after 2010 from a position of deeply ingrained structural vulnerability. Decades of state-imposed marginalization had left them without legal recognition, facing systematic cultural suppression, and contending with economic precarity potentially exacerbated by insecure land tenure. While Afrin was often described, particularly in comparison to other parts of Syria, as relatively stable or even an "oasis" [20] before the full onset of the civil war, this relative peace masked the underlying fragility of the Yezidi community's position. Their history in Afrin before 2010 was defined by the persistent tension between their ancient roots and cultural resilience on the one hand, and the multifaceted pressures exerted by a state hostile to their distinct identity on the other. This pre-existing vulnerability undoubtedly shaped their experiences and responses during the subsequent years of war, displacement, and

persecution.

VII. Works Cited

5 Wikipedia. "Yazidis." Accessed via research query.
3 Wikipedia. "Persecution of Yazidis." Accessed via research query.
1 Britannica. "Yazīdī." Accessed via research query.
22 Society for Threatened Peoples. "Syrian Arab Republic: Alevis and Yazidis in Afrin threatened with extinction." Gfbv.de, August 13, 2020. Accessed via research query.
2 Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ). "Yazidis in Syria: Decades of Denial of Existence and Discrimination." STJ-SY.org, September 2022. Accessed via research query.
11 Middle East Forum (MEF). "Turkey's Demographic Engineering in Syria's Afrin Region: A Closer Look." Meforum.org. Accessed via research query.
25 Wikipedia. "Yazidism in Syria." Accessed via research query.
12 Wikipedia. "Afrin District." Accessed via research query.
31 Rudaw. "Population changes in northeast Syria cities revealed in new study." Rudaw.net, June 12, 2024. Accessed via research query.
17 Études rurales. "Urban Sufism and the Kurdo-Syrian Migration Pattern." Journals.openedition.org, 2013. Accessed via research query.
13 European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA). "Country Guidance: Syria 2024 - Kurds." EUAA.europa.eu, 2024. Accessed via research query.
32 Wikipedia (Kurdish). "Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat." Accessed via research query.
33 Wikipedia (Kurdish). "Amed." Accessed via research query.
34 Mardin Artuklu University Repository. "Jîyana Malbata Casimê Celîl..." Gcris.artuklu.edu.tr. Accessed via research query.
35 Mardin Artuklu University Repository. "Folklora Kurmancî..." Gcris.artuklu.edu.tr. Accessed via research query.
36 Archive.org. "Fallāḥū Sūriyā - Ḥannā Baṭāṭū." Accessed via research query.
4 Wikipedia (Arabic). "اليزيدية (Yazidism)." Accessed via research query.
37 Wikipedia (Arabic). "اضطهاد تنظيم الدولة الإسلامية (داعش) لليزيديين (ISIS Persecution of Yazidis)." Accessed via research query.
38 Islamic University of Madinah Journals. "حملة طوسون باشا على عسير..." Journals.iu.edu.sa. Accessed via research query.
39 Wadod.net. Search results related to historical texts. Accessed via research query.
24 Wikipedia. "List of Yazidi settlements." Accessed via research query.
23 Genocide Watch. "Afrin: A landscape of unprecedented Arabization." Genocidewatch.com, May 14, 2018. Accessed via research query.
10 Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights. "Cultivated Chaos: The Destruction of Afrin." Ceasefire.org, July 2020. Accessed via research query.
40 Voice of America (VOA). "Minorities in Syria's Afrin Fear Persecution If Turks Advance." Voanews.com, February 1, 2018. Accessed via research query.
19 Wilson Center. "Syrian Yezidis under Four Regimes: Assad, Erdogan, ISIS and the YPG." Wilsoncenter.org, July 2020. Accessed via research query.

5 Wikipedia. "Yazidis." Accessed via research query. 5
3 Wikipedia. "Persecution of Yazidis." Accessed via research query. 3
2 Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ). "Yazidis in Syria: Decades of Denial of Existence and Discrimination." STJ-SY.org, September 2022. 2
14 Bellingcat. "Afrin: Incidents Of Desecration And Destruction Of Cultural Sites." Bellingcat.com, July 11, 2019. Accessed via research query.
22 Society for Threatened Peoples. "Syrian Arab Republic: Alevis and Yazidis in Afrin threatened with extinction." Gfbv.de, August 13, 2020. 22
41 Yazda. Brief submitted to Canadian House of Commons committee. Ourcommons.ca. Accessed via research query.
42 Kurds in Syria (KiS). UPR Submission. Upr-info.org, 2013. Accessed via research query.
16 ResearchGate. "Nothing is ours anymore – HLP rights violations in Afrin, Syria." Researchgate.net, October 2019. Accessed via research query.
43 Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. "Borders Without a Nation: Syria, Outside Powers, and Open-Ended Instability." Carnegieendowment.org, September 2024. Accessed via research query.
44 Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index (BTI). "BTI 2018 Country Report Syria." Bti-project.org, 2018. Accessed via research query.
7 Amazon.com. Book listing: "The Yezidis: History, Community, Culture, Religion." Accessed via research query.
14 Bellingcat. "Afrin: Incidents Of Desecration And Destruction Of Cultural Sites." Bellingcat.com, July 11, 2019. 14
26 ResearchGate. "Yezidis in ancient India or Indians in ancient Mesopotamia? Re-imagining Ancient Yezidi Origins." Researchgate.net, August 2019. Accessed via research query.
6 Brill. Chapter 32: "Yezidism." Brill.com. Accessed via research query.
9 Transcript Verlag. Chapter: "The Seventy-Third Ferman: Ezidi Experiences of Displacement and Resistance." Transcript-open.de, 2019. Accessed via research query.
28 Free Yezidi Foundation (FYF). Official website. Freeyezidi.org. Accessed via research query.
11 Middle East Forum (MEF). "Turkey's Demographic Engineering in Syria's Afrin Region: A Closer Look." Meforum.org. 11
29 United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM). "Nobody’s Listening: Supporting the Yezidi Community 10 Years After the Genocide." Ushmm.org, 2024. Accessed via research query.
30 Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect. "Syria and the Responsibility to Protect." Globalr2p.org, July 2020. Accessed via research query.
45 Wikipedia. "Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria." Accessed via research query.
43 Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. "Borders Without a Nation: Syria, Outside Powers, and Open-Ended Instability." Carnegieendowment.org, September 2024. 43
21 Syria Direct. "Yazidis’ long struggle against landlessness and discrimination in rural Hasakah." Syriadirect.org, May 9, 2023. Accessed via research query.
22 Society for Threatened Peoples. "Syrian Arab Republic: Alevis and Yazidis in Afrin threatened with extinction." Gfbv.de, August 13, 2020. 22

2 Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ). "Yazidis in Syria: Decades of Denial of Existence and Discrimination." STJ-SY.org, September 2022. 2
8 Middle East Institute (MEI). "Sectarian-Based Violence: The Case of the Yezidis in Iraq and Syria." Mei.edu, August 12, 2014. Accessed via research query.
5 Wikipedia. "Yazidis." Accessed via research query. 5
46 ResearchGate. "Syria and its Regional Neighbors: A Case of Cultural Property Protection Policy Failure." Researchgate.net, September 2015. Accessed via research query.
15 European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights (ECCHR). "Questions and Answers: Crimes against the civilian population in Afrin, Syria." Ecchr.eu. Accessed via research query.
47 De Europa. "The Syrian conflict: A complex web of local, regional and international dynamics." Ojs.unito.it, 2023. Accessed via research query.
20 Rudaw. "Afrin Yazidis living in fear four years after Turkish takeover." Rudaw.net, July 26, 2022. Accessed via research query.
17 Études rurales. "Urban Sufism and the Kurdo-Syrian Migration Pattern." Journals.openedition.org, 2013. 17
27 Amazon.com. Book listing: "Yezidis in Syria: Identity Building among a Double Minority." Accessed via research query.
3 Wikipedia. "Persecution of Yazidis." Accessed via research query. 3
48 Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES). "Housing, Land and Property Rights in the Arab Region." Library.fes.de, 2018. Accessed via research query.
49 Wikipedia. "Kurds." Accessed via research query.
50 Free Burma Rangers. "Syria Report, Part One: Ethnic Cleansing and the Persecution of Yezidis and Christians in Afrin, Northwestern Syria." Freeburmarangers.org, June 13, 2018. Accessed via research query.
10 Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights. "Cultivated Chaos: The Destruction of Afrin." Ceasefire.org, July 2020. 10
51 European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA). "Syria – Country Focus." EUAA.europa.eu, October 2023. Accessed via research query.
18 Danish Immigration Service (DIS) & Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation (ACCORD). "Human Rights Issues Concerning Kurds in Syria." Ecoi.net, May 2010. Accessed via research query.
2 Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ). Analysis of STJ report on Yazidis in Syria. Internal analysis based on 2/2/.2
19 Wilson Center. Analysis of Wilson Center report on Syrian Yezidis. Internal analysis based on.19
14 Bellingcat. Analysis of Bellingcat article on Afrin cultural sites. Internal analysis based on 14/.14
22 Society for Threatened Peoples. Analysis of GfbV report on Afrin minorities. Internal analysis based on 22/22/.22
16 ResearchGate. Analysis of ResearchGate article on HLP rights in Afrin. Internal analysis based on.16
24 Wikipedia. Analysis of Wikipedia list of Yazidi settlements. Internal analysis based on.24
25 Wikipedia. Analysis of Wikipedia article on Yazidism in Syria. Internal analysis based on.25

17 Études rurales. Analysis of Études rurales article on Sufism and migration. Internal analysis based on 17/.17
6 Brill. Analysis of Brill chapter on Yezidism. Internal analysis based on.6

Works cited

1. Yazidi | History, Culture, & Religion - Britannica, accessed May 6, 2025, https://www.britannica.com/topic/Yazidi
2. Decades of Denial of Existence and Discrimination - The Yazidi minority in Syria is subject to multi-fold oppression. Yazidis are denied basic religious rights and constitutional recognition - Syrians for Truth and Justice, accessed May 6, 2025, https://stj-sy.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Final_English_Yazidis-in-Syria_Decades-of-Denial-of-Existence-and-Discrimination.pdf
3. Persecution of Yazidis - Wikipedia, accessed May 6, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Persecution_of_Yazidis
4. اليزيدية - ويكيبيديا, accessed May 6, 2025, https://ar.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%B2%D9%8A%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%A9
5. Yazidis - Wikipedia, accessed May 6, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yazidis
6. Chapter 32 Yezidism in: Handbook of Islamic Sects and Movements, accessed May 6, 2025, https://brill.com/display/book/9789004435544/BP000046.xml
7. The Yezidis: The History of a Community, Culture and Religion (Library of Modern Religion) - Amazon.com, accessed May 6, 2025, https://www.amazon.com/Yezidis-History-Community-Culture-Religion/dp/1784532169
8. Sectarian-Based Violence: The Case of the Yezidis in Iraq and Syria | Middle East Institute, accessed May 6, 2025, https://www.mei.edu/publications/sectarian-based-violence-case-yezidis-iraq-and-syria
9. Refugees Once Again? Rethinking the History of Ezidi Forced Migration and Displacement - transcript.open, accessed May 6, 2025, https://www.transcript-open.de/pdf_chapter/bis%205399/9783839450130/9783839450130-005.pdf
10. Cultivating Chaos: Afrin after Operation Olive Branch - The Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights, accessed May 6, 2025, https://www.ceasefire.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/CFR_Syria_EN_July20.pdf
11. Turkey's Demographic Engineering in Syria's Afrin Region: A Closer Look, accessed May 6, 2025, https://www.meforum.org/meq/turkeys-demographic-engineering-in-syrias-afrin-region-a-closer-look
12. Afrin District - Wikipedia, accessed May 6, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afrin_District
13. 4.10.2. Kurds | European Union Agency for Asylum - EUAA, accessed May 6, 2025, https://euaa.europa.eu/country-guidance-syria-2024/4102-kurds

14. Afrin: Incidents Of Desecration And Destruction Of Cultural Sites ..., accessed May 6, 2025, https://www.bellingcat.com/news/mena/2019/07/11/afrin-incidents-of-desecration-and-destruction-of-cultural-sites/
15. Crimes in Syria: The neglected atrocities of Afrin Q&A on the legal background - ECCHR, accessed May 6, 2025, https://www.ecchr.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/QA_Crimes_in_Afrin_EN.pdf
16. (PDF) "Nothing is ours anymore" - HLP rights violations in Afrin, Syria, accessed May 6, 2025, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/336059330_Nothing_is_ours_anymore_-_HLP_rights_violations_in_Afrin_Syria
17. Kurdish Sufi Spaces of Rural-Urban. Connection in Northern Syria - OpenEdition Journals, accessed May 6, 2025, https://journals.openedition.org/etudesrurales/9290?lang=en
18. Human rights issues concerning Kurds in Syria - Ecoi.net, accessed May 6, 2025, https://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/1111863/90_1273216397_2010-05-dis-accord-human-rights-issues-concerning-kurds-in-syria.pdf
19. www.wilsoncenter.org, accessed May 6, 2025, https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/media/uploads/documents/Syrian%20Yezidis%20under%20Four%20Regimes.pdf
20. Yazidis in Afrin on the brink of disappearance | Rudaw.net, accessed May 6, 2025, https://www.rudaw.net/english/opinion/26072022
21. Yazidis' long struggle against landlessness and discrimination in rural Hasakah, accessed May 6, 2025, https://syriadirect.org/yazidis-long-struggle-against-landlessness-and-discrimination-in-rural-hasakah/
22. Syrian Arab Republic: Alevis and Yazidis in Afrin threatened with extinction - GfbV, accessed May 6, 2025, https://www.gfbv.de/fileadmin/redaktion/UN-statements/2020_2/Syrian_Arab_Republic_Alevis_and_Yazidis_in_Afrin_threatened_with_extinction.pdf
23. Afrin: A landscape of unprecedented Arabization - Genocide Watch, accessed May 6, 2025, https://www.genocidewatch.com/single-post/2018/05/14/afrin-a-landscape-of-unprecedented-arabization
24. List of Yazidi settlements - Wikipedia, accessed May 6, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Yazidi_settlements
25. Yazidism in Syria - Wikipedia, accessed May 6, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yazidism_in_Syria
26. (PDF) Yezidis in ancient India, or Indians in ancient Mesopotamia?: Re-imagining Ancient Yezidi Origins - ResearchGate, accessed May 6, 2025, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/335217402_Yezidis_in_ancient_India_or_Indians_in_ancient_Mesopotamia_Re-imagining_Ancient_Yezidi_Origins
27. Amazon.com: Yezidis in Syria: Identity Building among a Double Minority, accessed May 6, 2025, https://www.amazon.com/Yezidis-Syria-Identity-Building-Minority/dp/0739177745

28. Free Yezidi Foundation (FYF), accessed May 6, 2025, https://freeyezidi.org/
29. Nobody's Listening: Supporting the Yezidi Community 10 Years After the Genocide, accessed May 6, 2025, https://www.ushmm.org/genocide-prevention/blog/nobodys-listening-supporting-the-yezidi-community-10-years-after-the
30. Failure to Protect: Syria and the UN Security Council, accessed May 6, 2025, https://www.globalr2p.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/syriapaper_final.pdf
31. Nearly half of Rojava's population fled due to Syria war: Study - Rudaw, accessed May 6, 2025, https://www.rudaw.net/english/middleeast/syria/120620241
32. Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat - Wîkîpediya, accessed May 6, 2025, https://ku.wikipedia.org/wiki/Partiya_Yek%C3%AEtiya_Demokrat
33. Amed - Wîkîpediya, accessed May 6, 2025, https://ku.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amed
34. K. T. Zanîngeha Mardîn Artukluyê Enstîtuya Zimanên Zindî yên Li, accessed May 6, 2025, https://gcris.artuklu.edu.tr/bitstreams/a3b837da-fe64-4973-8d3d-801a601216f4/download
35. K.T. Zanîngeha Mardîn Artukluyê Enstîtuya Zimanên Zindî yên li, accessed May 6, 2025, https://gcris.artuklu.edu.tr/bitstreams/bfabc1f1-ed8f-4cfc-85dd-6697d68372cf/download
36. Full text of "مراجع ومصادر عن تاريخ العلويين في العراق وبلاد الشام" - Internet Archive, accessed May 6, 2025, https://archive.org/stream/Alawite_books_sy_iq/%D9%81%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%AD%D9%88%20%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A7%20-%20%D8%AD%D9%86%D8%A7%20%D8%A8%D8%B7%D8%A7%D8%B7%D9%88_djvu.txt
37. اضطهاد تنظيم الدولة الإسلامية (داعش) لليزيديين - ويكيبيديا, accessed May 6, 2025, https://ar.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D8%A7%D8%B6%D8%B7%D9%87%D8%A7%D8%AF_%D8%AA%D9%86%D8%B8%D9%8A%D9%85_%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AF%D9%88%D9%84%D8%A9_%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D8%B3%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%85%D9%8A%D8%A9_(%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%B4)_%D9%84%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%B2%D9%8A%D8%AF%D9%8A%D9%8A%D9%86
38. (بيشة في عهد الدولة السعودية الأولى غرب وجنوب غربي البلاد (1212-1232هـ / 1798-1817م) (دراسة تحليلية) Bisha in the first Saudi state era and its influence on the west and southwest of the state (1212-1232 AH / 1798-1817 AD) - Journal Article - مجلة الجامعة الإسلامية - الجامعة الإسلامية بالمدينة المنورة, accessed May 6, 2025, https://journals.iu.edu.sa/ESS/Main/Article/3416
39. البحث السريع • مركز ودود للفهارس وكتب التحقيق, accessed May 6, 2025, https://wadod.net/find/fast
40. Minorities in Syria's Afrin Fear Persecution as Turkey Escalates Offensive - VOA, accessed May 6, 2025, https://www.voanews.com/a/afrin-syria-minorities-fear-persecution/4234119.html
41. The Yazidi Refugee Crisis, accessed May 6, 2025, https://www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/421/CIMM/Brief/BR9342569/br-external/Yazda-e.pdf
42. Persecution and Discrimination against Kurdish Citizens in Syria - UPR info,

accessed May 6, 2025, https://upr-info.org/sites/default/files/documents/2013-10/kis-kurdsinsyria-eng.pdf
43. Borders Without a Nation: Syria, Outside Powers, and Open-Ended Instability, accessed May 6, 2025, https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2024/09/borders-without-a-nation-syria-outside-powers-and-open-ended-instability
44. Syria - bti-project.org, accessed May 6, 2025, https://bti-project.org/fileadmin/api/content/en/downloads/reports/country_report_2018_SYR.pdf
45. Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria - Wikipedia, accessed May 6, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democratic_Autonomous_Administration_of_North_and_East_Syria
46. Syria and its Regional Neighbors: A Case of Cultural Property Protection Policy Failure?, accessed May 6, 2025, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/282832754_Syria_and_its_Regional_Neighbors_A_Case_of_Cultural_Property_Protection_Policy_Failure
47. Ethnic or political cleansing? Identity, cultural heritage and demographic engineering in the Turkish-occupied territories of, accessed May 6, 2025, https://ojs.unito.it/index.php/deeuropa/article/download/10572/9061/35628
48. Reclaiming Home, The struggle for socially just housing, land and property rights in Syria, Iraq and Libya - Bibliothek der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, accessed May 6, 2025, https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/tunesien/15664.pdf
49. Kurds - Wikipedia, accessed May 6, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kurds
50. Syria Report, Part One: Ethnic Cleansing and the Persecution of Yezidis and Christians in Afrin, Northwestern Syria | Free Burma Rangers, accessed May 6, 2025, https://www.freeburmarangers.org/2018/06/13/syria-report-part-one-ethnic-cleansing-persecution-yezidis-christians-afrin-northwestern-syria/
51. Syria - Country Focus - EUAA, accessed May 6, 2025, https://euaa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/publications/2023-10/2023_10_COI_Report_Syria_Country_Focus_EN.pdf