



THE RELOCATION OF YAZIDIS IN FIDANLIK CAMP, DIYARBAKIR

The Yazidis (Ezidis) experienced genocide in their homeland, Sinjar/Iraq, by ISIS in 2014. After this massacre, thousands of them had to migrate to Turkey and they were settled in camps in Diyarbakır, Batman, Mardin, Sirnak and Urfa. One of these camps is Fidanlık Camp, which is affiliated with Diyarbakır Yenişehir Municipality. At the first stage, nearly seven thousands people were settled in this camp. During the two and a half years, Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality and Yenişehir Municipality covered all the expenses of the camp without any support from the central government. When the center of Sinjar was liberated from ISIS on November 13, 2015, the vast majority of Yazidis returned to Sinjar, but 1,029 people continued to stay in Fidanlık Camp. Yazidis, who do not have any legal status as other refugees fleeing from Syria, Iraq and other Middle Eastern countries to Turkey, lived in the camp without any legal rights.

The situation of Fidanlık Camp became complicated, when the co-mayors of Diyarbakır Yenişehir Municipality were arrested on 6 December 2016. One day after their arrest, a government bureaucrat was appointed to the municipality to replace its co-mayors. On December 9, 2016 Disaster and Emergency Management (AFAD) Directorate stated that the camp would be closed and the remaining residents in the camp would be distributed to different camps of AFAD. After a few days, the head of the AFAD Diyarbakır province informed the camp dwellers that they had to relocate to one of AFAD camps, asking them to choose one of the camps in Midyat, Nusaybin, Maraş, Antep and Malatya. However, the camp dwellers refused it and insisted on staying in Fidanlık Camp.

The first practice of the trustee who replaced the mayors was to rupture the relations between the Yazidis and the people of Diyarbakır, who have been supporting the Yazidis in the camp from the very outset. This practice of isolation and relocation is a new policy that is unacceptable. AFAD, which works under the directives of the office of Prime Minister, has the responsibility to provide the welfare of Yazidi people and all other refugees in Turkey. However, this practice of isolation and relocation has caused concern, insecurity, helplessness, and anger among Yazidi people.

On the first day of 2017, the government started relocating the Yazidis in the Fidanlık camp to Midyat against the consent and will of the camp dwellers.

The democratic international community, the institutions dealing with migration and refugees in particular, should raise awareness and act upon these new policies of AFAD targeting the Yazidi refugees. They should urge the Turkish government to be responsive to the needs and demands of the Yazidi refugees and provide them with a humane life.

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