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March 26, 2015

Dear Colleagues,

On March 19, 2015, UN human rights investigators accused ISIS of genocide against the Yezidis, an ethnic minority in Northern Iraq. Yezidis are monotheists. Their new year is April 15, 2015 in the Yezidi month of Nisan when they will enter the year 6765. (And did you realize that our world received a great gift from the Yezidis: the custom of shaking hands as a gesture of peace, and to make amends when concluding an argument?)

ISIS has routed the entire population of half a million Yezidis from their homes in Northern Iraq. 10,000 have been brutally murdered, many have been or are being tortured, over 1,000 children have died of dehydration and there is danger of mass starvation and disease. Thousands of Yezidi women and girls are enslaved as sex slaves and there is evidence of gang rapes. Yezidi boys have been kidnapped, forced to convert and are being brainwashed to become terrorists. There is also evidence that ISIS is bent on wiping out other minorities, including Christians and certain Muslims.

Please raise consciousness in your community about the Yezidis and others.

- Call the Yezidis to mind when shaking hands during worship, classes and daily life.
- If you recount modern plagues, include sex slavery and other torture, brainwashing and genocide against the Yezidis and other minorities in Iraq.
- If you remember other genocides on Yom HaShoah, include the Yezidis who lost almost 23 million at the hands of the Ottoman Empire and Saddam Hussein's forces.
- Invite clergy, educators and lay leaders to attend an interfaith press conference Wed., April 15, 2015, 10:30 am to noon at Congregation Netivot Shalom, 1316 University Avenue in Berkeley.
- Issue an open letter to Yezidis International offering support and solidarity.
- To RSVP for the press conference, to forward letters of support and to obtain additional information, please contact Rabbi Pam Frydman at rebpam@gmail.com or 415-261-3404.

Wishing you a sweet and liberating Pesach.

Warm regards,

Abigail Porth
Associate Executive
JCRC

Karen Stiller
JCRC Middle East
Project Director

Rabbi Marvin Goodman
Executive Director, Director –
Board of Rabbis Northern CA

