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Audience of the Holy Father with a Representation of the Yazidi Community in Germany

At 9.00 this morning, in the room adjacent to the Paul VI Hall, the Holy Father Francis received in audience a Representation of the Yazidi Community in Germany.

The following is the Pope's greeting to those present at the meeting:

Greeting of the Holy Father

Dear brothers,

I greet you fraternally, and I thank you for this meeting, through which I embrace all the members of the Yazidi community, in particular those who live in Iraq and Syria. My solidarity and prayerful thought goes to the innocent victims of senseless and barbaric inhumanity. It is unacceptable that human beings be persecuted and killed for their religious affiliation! Every person has the right to profess freely and without constrictions their own religious belief.

Your history, rich in spirituality and culture, has unfortunately been marked by unspeakable violations of the fundamental rights of the human person: kidnapping, slavery, torture, forced conversions, killings. Your shrines and places of worship have been destroyed. The most fortunate among you have been able to flee, but leaving behind all they had, even the things dearest and most sacred to them.

In many parts of the world there are still religious and ethnic minorities, including Christians, who are persecuted on account of their faith. The Holy See never tires of intervening to denounce these situations, demanding acknowledgment, protection and respect. At the same time, it urges dialogue and reconciliation to heal all wounds.

Faced with the tragedy that is being perpetrated against your community, it can be understood, as the Gospel

says, that from the heart of man the darkest forces can be unleashed, capable of planning the annihilation of a brother, considering him an enemy, an adversary, or even an individual without the same human dignity. Once again I raise my voice in favour of the rights of the Yazidi, in particular the right to exist as a religious community: no-one can appropriate the power to cancel out a religious group because it does not form part of the so-called "tolerated" ones.

I also think of the members of your community who are still in the hands of terrorists: I fervently hope that everything possible may be done to save them, as well as to trace those who have disappeared and to give an identity and a dignified burial to those who have been killed. The international community cannot remain as a silent and inert spectator before your tragedy. I therefore encourage institutions and persons of good will belonging to other communities to contribute to the reconstruction of your homes and your places of worship. May all concrete efforts be made to create the right conditions for the return of refugees to their homes and to preserve the identity of the Yazidi community.

May God help us build together a world where we can live in peace and brotherhood.
