“Marriages and markets” – How Islamic State is using sexual violence and slavery as weapons of genocide against the Yazidi community

December 2014

“Marriages and markets”

How ISIS is using sexual violence and slavery as weapons of genocide against the Yazidi community, by Nikki Marczak

“Sexual violence must not be used to gain the upper hand in political and military struggles, and the bodies of innocent civilians must not be used as battlefields for warring parties”.

-Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence Zainab Hawa Bangura

Yazidi children in Northern Iraq
Introduction

Right now, as this paper is being written, civilians – women, men and children - are being persecuted and killed by the 'Islamic State of Iraq and Syria' (ISIS)¹ in Iraq, in what has been internationally recognised as involving crimes against humanity, and indeed, in some cases, genocide. ISIS tactics of terror and barbarity have led to it being widely known as the ‘cult of death’.

ISIS is committing gross human rights abuses against Shi’a Muslims and those Sunni Muslims who refuse to submit to its rule. Further, it is targeting a range of ethnic and religious minorities, in attacks that amount to genocide. This paper will look specifically at the genocidal campaign against the Yazidi people.

Moreover, ISIS reserves special treatment for women and girls that, in the case of the Yazidi, does not necessarily involve murder, but a range of other tactics that are tantamount to genocide. Widespread and systematic use of genocidal sexual violence – rape, abduction and sex slavery – as well as forced conversion and forced marriage to ISIS fighters, are being used as weapons to ultimately destroy the group, as a group.

The targeting of women and girls through sexual violence and other gendered tactics, should be considered primarily a women’s human rights issue, with patriarchy at its foundation. However, misogyny can intersect with ethnic and religious hatred to produce sexual violence that is genocidal, that is, used with the requisite intent to eliminate a group.

Through systematic sexual violence, individual Yazidi women are physically and psychologically harmed and stigmatised, families are traumatised, and communities are shattered and deprived of their ability to self-perpetuate.

In light of recognition by the G8 and the United Nations that “sexual violence can constitute a crime against humanity or a constitutive act with respect to genocide”,² this paper will examine academic sources that demonstrate how sexual violence against women and girls can be used to further genocidal aims. It will then apply this premise to the current situation in Iraq, based on

¹ ISIS has officially changed its name to Islamic State, however there is opposition to this within the broader Muslim community so this article maintains the previous organisation name, ISIS.
media articles, UN and government reports, non-government organisation material and media interviews with Yazidi survivors.

The picture obtained by analysing the treatment of women and girls is of a highly gendered genocide with sexual violence a prime component, and one in which the world must intervene before thousands more suffer.

Background

The field of genocide studies has historically focused on the whole target group as victims, without consideration of the other identity components of individuals in the group. Differentiating the experiences of women and men was originally criticised by some as an attempt to create a hierarchy of suffering.iii However, over the past two decades, genocide historiography has developed and it is now widely recognised that genocide victims (and perpetrators) do experience genocide differently based on their sex/gender, and that studying this can help us better understand the nuances of genocide, with a view to prevention.

The experiences of women have historically been ignored, with the male experience seen as ‘universal’ and women’s experiences viewed as ‘particular’.iv Given the longstanding neglect of women’s experiences, I will be focusing this essay on the treatment of women and girls. Although the effects of genocide on women extend beyond sexual violence (for instance, homelessness, poverty, displacement), the sexual violence aspect of ISIS’ genocide of Yazidi is especially pronounced, and this paper does not have the scope to go beyond that element.

Yazidi refugees in Northern Iraq
Sexual violence as a tool of genocide

For the purposes of this essay, I will be relying on the definitions of the 'International Criminal Court' (ICC), as it is most relevant to the current Iraqi case. The ICC defines sexual violence as rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilisation, and other forms that may not necessarily involve physical contact, such as enforced nudity, and forcing other victims to participate in perpetrating sexual abuse. The 'International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda' (ICTR) defined rape as "a physical invasion of a sexual nature, committed on a person under circumstances which are coercive." Until very recently, sexual violence was considered an inevitable side effect of war, with women viewed as the ‘spoils of war’, a ‘reward’ for soldiers, and in the context of ethnic conflicts, a means of attacking the ‘honour’ of the woman’s family, and by extension, her community. Sexual violence should be recognised first and foremost as an attack on the individual woman (and as a gendered attack by men against women); however in a genocidal context, it serves as a simultaneous assault on her family and community. The trauma and stigma associated with rape affects the future of the woman herself (in terms of marriageability, child-bearing and economic livelihood), and thus, when implemented as a strategy on a broad scale, sexual violence can also represent an attack on the continuity of the group. Allison Ruby Reid-Cunningham writes that rape is used as a tactic of war and genocide:

...because of its physical and psychosocial consequences for individuals, families, and communities. The victimization of raped women affects the community through the collective responses of survivors and their families, friends, and neighbors. Forced intercourse and impregnation represent a symbolic conquest of the woman by the rapist. This conquest becomes generalized to the whole population as survivors, witnesses, families, and communities internalize rape as an assault on their collective consciousness.

Here, we need to distinguish between rape as a war crime, and rape as genocide; the former occurs on a large scale and is a crime against humanity while the latter refers to rape that is systematically being perpetrated against a targeted group as part of an overall attempt, with intent, to destroy that group.
When sexual violence is used systematically as part of ethnic conflict and genocide, there is an intersectionality between gender and ethnicity, or sexism and racism. In other words, women are being targeted as women, and as members of a particular ethnic group. As Miranda Alison states:

During times of conflict, multiple binary constructions are formed; not only is ‘masculine’ contrasted to ‘feminine’ within a group and ‘us’ contrasted to ‘them’ between groups, but ‘our women’ are contrasted to ‘their women’ and ‘our men’ to ‘their men’. ‘Our women’ are chaste, honourable, and to be protected by ‘our men’; ‘their women’ are unchaste and depraved.

How can we tell if sexual violence is being used as a genocidal tool? Genocidal sexual violence is systematic and widespread; facilitated, perpetrated and condoned by authorities; and backed by the relevant intent to destroy the group. This intent may, like in other strategies of genocide, be covert rather than explicit in government policy. But it can be inferred from the nature and scope of the sexual violence, and its broader context. Sexual violence will frequently be accompanied by other indicators of genocide: local massacres; killing of community leaders and elites; cultural and religious vandalism; forced conversion; deportations (death marches); and the early separation of men and women along with immediate massacres of ‘battle-aged’ men. Adam Jones argues that the latter is a common harbinger of root-and-branch genocide.

Finally, a prime indicator of a genocidal ideology and intent is the presence of acts of symbolic brutality that have been termed ‘life-force atrocities’. This concept shows how genocide fundamentally targets the family, as the real and symbolic centre of the group’s continuity. Thus, many genocides incorporate inversion rituals and ritual desecrations such as rape in the presence of family members, which target:

...the family unit within victim groups and betray(s) a preoccupation with the group’s life force in its physical and symbolic dimensions.
In the current ISIS genocide of the Yazidi, genocidal sexual violence is a complex attack working in parallel and complementary ways: it attacks the individual, the family and the group; it targets women primarily, and this can have a lead-on effect to men and the community; it serves to stigmatise and dehumanise the victim and by extension, the group; it attacks women as women, and women as members of the Yazidi group; it has beneficial political and psychological effects on the perpetrators’ loyalty (including male bonding and shared complicity); and it is a core strategy in symbolic conquest and domination of the Yazidi people.

**The Legal Framework**

The UN Convention on Genocide was ratified in 1948. Although it does not explicitly stipulate sexual violence, this can be read into its articles, as the ICTR did when it found that sexual violence causes serious bodily and mental harm; it imposes conditions calculated to bring about physical destruction (rape survivors are often ostracised from their community); and it prevents births through irreparable physical damage, mutilation, sterilisation, and even long-term psychological trauma which may prevent the survivor from bearing children of her own ethnic group.\textsuperscript{xi} Lisa Sharlach echoes this:

> Rape certainly may cause serious physical and/or mental injury to the survivor, and also may destroy the morale of her family and ethnic community. Rape, even if it does not kill the victim, may fall under the category of crimes of genocide.\textsuperscript{xii}
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Sexual violence is not listed as a grave breach in the 1949 Geneva Conventions. In fact, the 1998 Rome Statute of the ICC was the first international legal instrument to explicitly include sexual and gender-based crimes as war crimes. The ICTR made a landmark decision regarding the use of sexual violence as genocide in the Akayesu case, which recognised rape and sexual violence:

...as instruments of genocide based primarily on the physical and psychological harm to the woman, and secondarily on the potential impact of this on the targeted community.

Forced marriage (which obviously includes ongoing sexual violence) has also recently been found to be a human rights violation and a crime against humanity, with the Special Court for Sierra Leone acknowledging this in the AFRC Trial and the RUF Trial.

Given this legal framework and precedents set in relation to sexual violence as a tool of genocide, I assert that the mass sexual violence perpetrated against Yazidi women is genocidal.

Who is ISIS and what is going on in Iraq?

ISIS grew out of various Islamist extremist groups, including al-Qaeda, and its growth has been facilitated by the ongoing instability in Iraq and the civil war in Syria, where its base lies. As noted in a report by the German Institute of Global and Area Studies:

The Arab Spring created new room to manoeuvre for jihadism...fundamentalist Salafists have adapted very quickly and pragmatically to changing circumstances.

ISIS has taken over smaller groups, accessed funding and weapons, as well as massive oil reserves in Iraq. A major factor in the rise of ISIS is the sectarian conflict between Sunni and Shi’a Muslims. As far back as 2005, Sunni ISIS has been targeting Shi’a Muslim communities with suicide bombings and executions.

On 29 June 2014, after ISIS had taken significant territory, it declared the establishment of an Islamic caliphate, with Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi as its leader (caliph). ISIS is governed by the
principles that the caliph has supreme religious authority over all Muslims, and that anyone who does not acknowledge the caliph is an ‘apostate’. xix

ISIS’ ideology entails eliminating any non-Muslims or Muslims who refuse to swear loyalty to the group from the area:

Jihadist Salafis are calling for a global armed fight against the global power of the ‘nonbelievers’ and the ‘non-Islamic’ regimes in the Islamic world… It is not just minorities such as the Christians, Shiites, Turkmen, and Yazidis – all threatened and persecuted with murder – who are fleeing the caliph, but also many Sunnis. xx

As ISIS has advanced, taking control of Fallujah and Ramadi in January 2014, and Mosul in June, it has prompted massive ethnic migration and refugee movement. In areas under IS control, it has:

...taken on ever more functions of a state; it imposes taxes and customs duties; distributes food; passes draconian Islamist court verdicts; maintains information offices and a secret service; presents itself with the capital Raqqa, a flag and a hymn; has a council and various executive organs; and grants its own passports in Mosul. xxi

In addition to its extreme application of Sharia Law, ISIS has fanatically misogynistic views about women; for instance, all women are forced to wear a niqab and cannot leave the house without a male ‘protector’. xxi In relation to its treatment of ethnic/religious minorities, ISIS’ fervent sexism overlaps with its racism and religious intolerance to produce a foul cauldron of hatred and violence.

Is ISIS committing genocide?

It has been widely reported that ISIS is committing crimes against humanity, as recognised in international law, “with an apparent systematic and widespread character”. xxiii Over 24,000 civilians were killed or injured in Iraq during the first eight months of 2014, and 1.8 million Iraqis have been displaced.

Moreover, ISIS’ attacks against the Yazidi constitute genocide. ISIS considers the Yazidi (whose religion predates Islam and combines parts of Zoroastrianism) to be devil worshippers. The UN
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Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict in Iraq: 6 July – 10 September 2014 states that “ISIL regards the Yazidi as kufara (non-believers) to whom they give the option of conversion or death” xxiv. In some instances, Yazidi communities have not even been provided the ‘opportunity’ of conversion but have rather been “…treated as a group to be eliminated from the face of the earth.” xxv

Genocide requires special intent to destroy a group in whole or in part and this intent “can be deduced from statements or orders or from a systematic pattern of coordinated acts.” xxvi While ISIS has no explicit ‘Final Solution’ as such, genocidal intent can be inferred from the stated ideology of the group, including the aim to eradicate non-believers, in conjunction with the pattern of targeted acts against the Yazidi, many of which are recognised indicators of an escalation towards genocide. These include mass killing of community and religious leaders; destroying and desecrating places of religious or cultural significance (Yazidi shrines); looting Yazidi property; trapping groups of Yazidi in areas with no humanitarian supplies and with no escape from mass murder or death; ethnic cleansing of Yazidi communities; gendered tactics of separating Yazidi men and women; and finally localised massacres of civilians.

These massacres have been widely reported in the global media and by human rights organisations, as well as verified by officials like the Iraqi human rights minister, Mohammed Shia al-Sudani, who said that some of the victims had been buried alive in mass graves. xxvii One newspaper reported that 80 Yazidi men had been executed in the tiny village of Kojo xxviii while Amnesty International corroborated other similar reports, saying that dozens of men and boys in the Sinjar region had been rounded up and transported to the village outskirts to be massacred. xxix

In the episode that prompted international action ahead of an “imminent genocide”, xxx on 4 August 2014, ISIS fighters captured the town of Sinjar, killing hundreds of Yazidi civilians while rounding up dozens of others and holding them captive in schools, prisons, military bases, government offices, and private homes, often with little food or water. xxxi 20,000-30,000 Yazidi became trapped on Mount Sinjar (UNHCR), “encircled by ISIL fighters” xxxii and denied food, water or medical supplies. Refusing escape to a persecuted group is a key indicator of genocidal intent. Witnesses recounted seeing dozens of dead on the road from Matu
village to Mount Sinjar while others reported seeing 200 children who had perished from thirst, starvation and heat. There are reports of civilians being shot into ditches and widespread looting. These incidents are considered genocidal under Article 1 of the UNGC, as they include killing members of the group, causing serious bodily or mental harm, and deliberately inflicting conditions calculated to bring about its physical destruction.

Further, those boys and men who were spared death, were forced to convert, a common strategy used with the aim of ultimately destroying the group. Human Rights Watch reported the fighters forced the captives to participate in a mass ceremony: “They made us recite the *shahada* [Islamic creed] three times. … The Yazidi people were crying and scared.”

The UN has acknowledged that:

> The targeting of ethnic and religious communities by ISIL appears to be part of a deliberate and systematic policy that aims to suppress, permanently cleanse or expel, or in some instances, destroy those communities within areas of its control.

**ISIS genocide – treatment of Yazidi women and girls**

In every one of the incidents described by the UN and other human rights organisations, women and children were killed along with the men, or abducted and/or systematically raped. The latter practice is in fact, so widespread, that it is now estimated that 7,000 women and children have been kidnapped.

ISIS has been targeting women “particularly harshly” according the UN report. The use of sexual violence against Yazidi women and girls is a prime example of the intersection of misogyny and ethnic/religious hatred producing genocide.

**Rape, abduction and sex slavery**

*One should remember that enslaving the families of the kuffar - the infidels - and taking their women as concubines is a firmly established aspect of the Shariah, or Islamic law.*
In September 2014, a respected Australian newspaper reported that soldiers entering streets after an aerial attack found dead bodies, mangled car carcasses, and naked women, bound and left on the ground by IS fighters. The article tells of a 17-year-old Yazidi girl, Mayat, who was locked up and used as a sex slave:

They were circulated in turn through ‘rooms of horror’... Some of the youngest girls stopped speaking. Some of the older ones have tried to kill themselves. Now Mayat was worried she would never scrub the horror from her mind.

In one instance, Kurdish fighters discovered a naked woman tied to a tree, who had been repeatedly raped by ISIS fighters. The UN report cites numerous examples of mass abduction and subsequent sexual violence. For instance, in early August, ISIS killed 60 Yazidi men from Hardan village, abducting their wives and daughters and taking them to unknown destinations in the Tal Afar District. Around the same time, 500 women and girls were transported to the citadel of Tal Afar; some were sent to Syria while others were taken to Badoush Prison in Mosul. Witnesses to the UN reported that approximately 500 women and children from Ba’aj and more than 200 from Tal Banat had been abducted, while others had thrown themselves off Sinjar Mountain in order to avoid that fate.

There are several corroborating stories about those women who refuse to convert being trafficked as slaves in markets at Mosul and Raqqa. In the al-Quds area of Mosul, women and girls are presented with price tags for the buyers to negotiate. There are reports of lines of women covered from head to toe and tied to one another by a rope, while being led to a makeshift slave market.

19-year-old Jana witnessed ISIS demanding the Yazidi villagers convert before stealing jewellery, money and phones. The men were then separated from the women, males over 10 years old were massacred (confirmed by the UN report) and younger women and girls were taken to Mosul, where they were kept in a house with hundreds of others. Jana reports that ISIS men would choose girls and women to take home.

Similar stories have been recorded by Human Rights Watch. Layla, 16 and her sister, 13, were kidnapped by ISIS, separated from their mother, and kept in a large hall in Mosul:
Every night the armed guards would say, “The mujahidiin have arrived!” They would enter the hall and pick those they desired, sometimes with force, other times just by pointing at them. When we asked the guards what was happening, they would say, “They are taking them to help the mujahidiin at their houses’.

15-year-old Rewshe had been transported in a convoy of four buses to Raqqa with her sister and about 200 other young women and girls, and witnessed armed men buying and taking away twenty of the captives. She and her sister were sold to an ISIS fighter for $US1000. A teenage girl reported being transferred to the town of Ba’aj, west of Mosul, raped by various ISIS fighters several times, and then sold in a market.

Kamal, a young woman interviewed in Dohuk witnessed male relatives being killed and women being congregated in a school and fuel thrown over them. She was transferred to Mosul, saying:

Many things happened to us in the 11 days we were in Mosul ... You know why they had us – they were giving us to each other, passing us between themselves for sex...

These testimonies are corroborated by official government sources, with the Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues stating on 12 September that: “Girls as young as 12 or 13 have been forced to marry extremists or sold to the highest bidder - like cattle at an auction”.

Dabiq, ISIS’ online magazine, includes its own version of events:

One fifth of the slaves were transferred to the Islamic State's authority to be divided as khums,” a tax on war spoils, and the rest were divided among the fighters who participated in the Sinjar operation.

The widespread and systematic nature of the sexual violence, and the specific targeting of Yazidi women should be understood as *rape as genocide*. Catherine MacKinnon’s characterisation of the genocidal mass rape of Bosnian women is applicable here:

These rapes are being done by *some* men against *certain* women for specific reasons, here and now.... This is ethnic rape as an official policy of war in a genocidal campaign for political control...This is not rape out of control. It is rape under control. It is also rape unto death, rape as massacre, rape to kill and to make the victims wish they were dead. It is rape as an instrument of forced exile, rape to make you leave your home and never want to go back. It is rape to be seen and heard and watched and told to others: rape as
spectacle. It is rape to drive a wedge through a community, to shatter a society, to destroy a people. It is rape as genocide.\textsuperscript{xlviii}

**Forced marriage**

Forced marriage is a human rights violation but can also be used as a genocidal weapon, consistent with the Genocide Convention. Forced marriage causes serious bodily and/or mental harm; inflicts conditions of life calculated to bring about the victim group’s physical destruction and; imposes measures to prevent births. In forced marriages, victims are held captive and subjected to ongoing sexual abuse, in conjunction with other traumas, such as having witnessed their ‘husband’ murdering their relatives, and fearing their own community’s rejection were they to escape.\textsuperscript{xlix}

Evidence suggests that ISIS is systematically forcing Yazidi women to become ‘wives’ of ISIS fighters; according to one report, ISIS forced local beauticians to dress and make up abducted women, and instructed them to be submissive to their new husbands.\textsuperscript{l}

One escapee, Naveen, saw ISIS fighters taking Yazidi girls as young as twelve as ‘brides’, while 17 year old Adlee, said a “big bearded man” had forcibly taken her to Fallujah: “The man looked at me and said, “You are mine... everything they did, they did by force.”\textsuperscript{li}

Survivor Adeba was trafficked from her village to the Syrian border, converted to Islam and forcibly married to a fighter on the front line.\textsuperscript{lii} Similarly, 19 year old Seve witnessed ISIS kill her husband before being abducted and forced to marry in a group wedding:

It was supposed to be a wedding party. They were tossing sweets at us and taking photos and videos of us. They forced us to look happy for the videos and photos. The fighters were so happy; they were firing shots in the air and shouting... There was one woman from Kocho who was very beautiful. The leader of the fighters took her for himself. They dressed her up like a bride.\textsuperscript{liii}

The stigma of forced marriage means that any survivors who escape will have limited opportunities for marriage and child-bearing. Pakhshan Zangana, head of the High Council of Women’s Affairs for The Kurdish Regional Government says that survivors of rape and forced marriage will be virtual outcasts from their own communities.\textsuperscript{liv}
One media outlet reported that a group of girls who had been raped threw themselves off a cliff; this was corroborated by a Kurdish news interview of a Yazidi woman whose three daughters had suicided after being raped by ISIS:

My daughters were calling on people to kill them, but no one wanted to do that...So they jumped from the mountain and ended their bitter life.

Not only are individual Yazidis suiciding or being killed, but the genocidal effects on the group are clear:

The physical and psychological injuries inflicted upon the women and the group combine with the women’s ostracism from their community to bring about the physical destruction of the entire group.

The widespread nature of the abductions and forced marriages are an indicator of genocidal intent and evidence of the gendered strategies being employed by ISIS to eradicate Yazidi as a group. ISIS is targeting women and girls to destroy families and communities, and eventually bring about the elimination of the group.

**Forced impregnation and maternity**

Islam (and some Middle Eastern / Arabic cultures) holds that ethnicity/religion is patrilineal, that is, passed from the father to the child. Children born of Muslim fathers are automatically considered Muslim while women are seen as vessels for the male line, their identities malleable rather than fixed. As Sherrie L. Russell-Brown describes, women can be “...vessels through which the dilution, disappearance, and destruction of their own ethnic group occur(s)”.

The Rome Statute refers to forced pregnancy as “the unlawful confinement of a woman forcibly made pregnant, with the intent of affecting the ethnic composition of any population or carrying out grave violations of international law”. Adnan Kochar of the Kurdish Cultural Centre in London, explains:

ISIS have taken around 300 women from Sinjar to give to jihadists to marry and make pregnant to have a Muslim child. If they can't kill all Yazidis, they will try to smash the blond bloodline.
Forced impregnation and maternity operate as genocidal tools, with the requisite intent, which in the case of IS and the Yazidi, can be inferred from ISIS’ own statements and the systematic and common nature of the abductions and forced marriages. These tactics reduce the marriageability of the victim, thus having a broader effect on the continuity of the community; potentially result in the birth of children who are culturally/religiously considered members of the perpetrator group; and ‘occupy’ the womb of the victim, preventing her from bearing children of her own group (in line with the UNGC’s article, preventing births within the group).\textsuperscript{lxii} Forced maternity imposes on the victim a ‘social death’, which has a flow on effect on the community, as Robin May Schott writes:

\begin{quote}
The threat to natality posed by the harms of rape, forced pregnancy and forced maternity lie in the potential expulsion from the public world of certain groups—including women who are victims, members of the ‘enemy’ group, and children born of forced birth.\textsuperscript{lxii}
\end{quote}

\textbf{Life-force atrocities}

The presence of life-force atrocities – systematic ritualised attacks on the sacredness of the family - can serve as a strong indicator of a genocidal logic at work.\textsuperscript{lxiii} The use of sexual violence against Yazidi women is often accompanied by symbolic attacks on the family unit. For instance, there are reports of women being forced to call their families while they are being raped, with one mother saying she had listened to the gang-rape of her daughter for several hours.\textsuperscript{lxiv}

\begin{quote}
The desecration of families and family life in genocides therefore demonstrates a deep level of intent on the part of the perpetrators, a commitment to destruction so total that it exceeds physical killing.\textsuperscript{lxv}
\end{quote}

\textbf{Conclusion}

Mass sexual violence has been used during wartime for centuries, perhaps forever. It is now recognised both academically and legally that sexual violence can also be deliberately employed with the intention of eliminating a group.
Under the eye of the global community, ISIS continues to behead kidnapped victims and broadcast these murders on the internet; attack civilians and civilian infrastructure; and indeed, commit massacres and ethnic cleansing. Further, its intention to wipe out the Yazidi minority group is being implemented through gendered attacks on women and girls.

Sexual violence, abduction, forced conversion and marriage, are weapons in this battlefield – weapons against individuals, families and communities.

Jana, Naveen, Mayat, Layla, Adlee, Adeba, Kamal, Seve and Rewshe all managed to escape, but not before being sexually abused and left with physical and psychological scars that will haunt them for the rest of their lives.

Whether these individuals are accepted back into the Yazidi community cannot be known; but families have already been ripped apart; communities shattered. The international community has contributed some humanitarian assistance and military support, but much more will need to be done to protect the thousands of Yazidi women and girls from ongoing strategies of rape, abduction and lifelong torment, including the provision of support and refuge to survivors.

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