

Yezidi Atrocities Anniversary Event

A decade after the atrocities against the Yazidi community:

Preserving collected evidence and promoting a comprehensive transitional justice
framework

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Esteemed Colleagues of the Department of Foreign Affairs, Distinguished Representatives and Respected Guests

Today, we gather to solemnly mark the 10th anniversary of the Yazidi atrocities a decade of profound suffering, resilience, and unwavering pursuit of justice. As we reflect on the immense pain endured by the Yazidi community and the progress we have made, it is crucial that we reaffirm our commitment to justice, recovery, and the protection of fundamental human rights.

The Yazidi community, with its rich cultural and religious heritage, has been subjected to heinous crimes that have been recognized as genocide by more than ten nations, including Germany, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom. This recognition represents a vital step towards accountability. However, our journey is far from complete, and there remains significant work to be done.

The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) has been a proactive force in seeking justice. Initiatives such as the draft bill for a specialized court to prosecute international crimes are commendable.

Ongoing support includes psychological assistance, legal counseling, and financial compensation under the Yazidi Survivors Law No. 8 of 2021. Noteworthy initiatives, such as the establishment of the Institute of Psychotherapy and Psycho-traumatology at Kurdistan Region, Duhok University and specialized treatment programs in Germany, are critical in addressing the multifaceted needs of survivors. These efforts must be continuously expanded to ensure comprehensive support for all affected individuals.

UNITAD (United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh) also has played a crucial role in this endeavor, working tirelessly to document and prosecute the crimes committed by ISIS.

UN investigative team (UNITAD) has undertaken extensive field missions and conducted interviews with survivors and witnesses of ISIL crimes. Their investigations have focused on key atrocities, including those committed against the Yazidi community in Sinjar, the mass killings at Badush prison, and the use of chemical weapons by ISIL.

The team has been instrumental in digitizing and archiving crucial records related to Yazidi survivors, working with Iraqi and Kurdish authorities to preserve and

analyze evidence. This includes the successful completion of archiving projects related to the Office of the Rescued Abducted Yazidis and other key documents.

To provide a comprehensive overview of our recent collaboration with UNITAD, I want to outline the process through which we have received critical information in two stages:

On July 11, 2024, Ms. Ana Peyró Llopis, Acting Special Adviser and Head of UNITAD, and her team transferred a significant amount of data to the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). This initial transfer included 45.95 GB of documents related to ISIL crimes, compiled with the help of investigators, legal experts, forensic experts, and analysts. The data, received from judicial and non-judicial authorities within the KRG, was provided on an encrypted hard drive.

Following this, on August 25, 2024, I had the privilege of receiving an additional 11.9 GB of meticulously processed information from Acting Special Adviser. This collection of data, which UNITAD had further refined, was obtained from judicial and non-judicial authorities in the Kurdistan Region and was rigorously categorized, tagged, and analyzed for legal review.

The structured nature of this information greatly supports the KRG's investigative processes and reinforces our commitment to ensuring justice and accountability in Iraq and beyond.

Additionally, UNITAD has collaborated with international partners and member states to share evidence and support investigations, fostering global cooperation that is vital for holding ISIL perpetrators accountable and ensuring that justice is served.

KRG has consented to the UNITAD team's request to share information with third parties, on the condition that the KRG is notified in advance. This information sharing aims to facilitate the prosecution of perpetrators in a fair and independent manner, in alignment with UNITAD's mandate under the UN Security Council Resolution.

Specifically, UNITAD sought the KRG's approval to share witness statements with several countries, including Sweden, Finland, France, the Netherlands, Germany, Belgium, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Canada. Moreover, UNITAD

indicated the possibility of sharing these statements with other European Union countries.

In several of its periodical reports to the United Nations Security Council, UNITAD has referred to the atrocities committed against the Yazidi community as genocide. The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) welcomes this acknowledgment, viewing it as an important step in recognizing the severe crimes endured by the Yazidi Kurds.

These references in UNITAD's periodic reports underscore the gravity of the situation and reinforce the international community's additional commitment to addressing these atrocities. The KRG remains dedicated to supporting efforts that seek justice and accountability for the Yazidi victims and continues to collaborate with international bodies to ensure that those responsible for these crimes are held accountable.

The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) has established the High Ministerial Committee for the Crimes of ISIS Terrorists and the Recognition of Genocide and International Crimes in November 2020.

This committee was tasked with the following objectives: to ensure a fair trial and secure international recognition of ISIS crimes as genocide; to collaborate with UNITAD in achieving legal and political agreements; and to facilitate the early trial process by gathering relevant information and providing necessary training.

I want to underscore that the Kurdistan Regional Government is fully committed to the successful collection of evidence, investigation, and fair trial of ISIL criminals. The significant sacrifices made by the Kurdistan Peshmerga forces—over 1,814 martyred, 10,725 wounded, and 44 still missing—highlight the profound impact of this conflict on our community.

This is why we are dedicated to working closely with UNITAD, ensuring that justice is served and accountability is upheld for ISIL's crimes.

I also want to remind you that since the onset of the ISIS conflict, the Kurdistan Region has hosted 2 million internally displaced persons (IDPs). As of now, 730,930 IDPs remain in camps across the Kurdistan Region. Many IDPs have successfully returned to their homes through various return programs facilitated by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and humanitarian organizations. The KRG

ensures that these returns are conducted voluntarily, safely, and with respect for their rights.

The KRG has consistently demonstrated its commitment to the welfare of IDPs through comprehensive and coordinated efforts. As we evaluate the potential closure of IDP camps within the Kurdistan Region, it is crucial that we proceed with utmost caution and sensitivity, guaranteeing that all returns are voluntary and conducted under supportive and well-prepared conditions.

To ensure a fair trial process and to recognize the atrocities and acts perpetrated by ISIL as genocide, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) initially developed the draft law titled "Special Criminal Court Law on ISIS Crimes in the Kurdistan Region-Iraq." This draft was the result of several specialized meetings and workshops coordinated with international stakeholders and in consultation with (UNITAD).

Although the draft bill received positive feedback from the member states in UN including Security Council body and was presented for its first reading in the Kurdistan Parliament, it was subsequently excluded by the Federal Court. The bill was significant as it proposed provisions for prosecuting ISIS perpetrators for crimes such as genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes.

Currently, the KRG is addressing ISIS crimes through prosecutions under the Anti-Terrorism Law No. 3 of 2006, with several cases having been adjudicated in Kurdistan Regional Courts.

According to the recent statistics from the Kurdistan Regional Judicial Council, the Kurdistan region has adjudicated a total of 496 terrorism cases from 2021 to 2023. From January 1, 2024, to March 31, 2024, the KRG has trialed 123 terrorism cases in the Kurdistan Region

The rescue and rehabilitation of Yazidi survivors remain a priority. To date, 3,579 individuals have been rescued, and 242 have been martyred by ISIS. yet 2,596 remain missing. Continued efforts from the KRG, national agencies, and international partners are essential in addressing this crisis.

Another pressing issue is the lack of comprehensive legislation to address the unique circumstances of children born to ISIS-affiliated parents. Developing legal frameworks to support these individuals is essential for their protection, integration, and future well-being.

Preserving Yazidi cultural and religious heritage is also vital. Efforts by the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs to recognize Yazidi holidays and restore sacred sites, such as the Lalish Shrine, are commendable. These initiatives help maintain the community's identity and heritage in the face of adversity.

To advance our collective objectives, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) urges the international partners to undertake the following actions:

First, address the vulnerability of Yazidi children born during their enslavement by ISIS and support the Yazidi community's efforts to integrate these children. KRG also advocates for international support in establishing a joint archiving and documentation center. This center would focus on documenting ISIS's crimes against Yazidis and other communities, and contribute to broader discussions on genocide, resettlement.

Further, the KRG calls for the full implementation of the Sinjar Agreement of 2020 by the Iraqi Federal Authorities which is meant to facilitate the return of the Yazidis to their homeland in the Nineveh plains. KRG also urges the international community to facilitate the agreement between Baghdad and Erbil, supporting the development of a comprehensive strategy that ensures and upholds democratic principles for all communities in the region.

Additionally, continued international support is requested for the reconstruction of towns and villages devastated by conflict, with assistance from international partners.

KRG calls for the expedited creation of a comprehensive legal framework for prosecuting ISIL members on the basis of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes and addressing the needs of Yazidis, including those born to ISIS-affiliated parents. Intensified support for Yazidi survivors through expanded rescue operations, enhanced psychological support, and increased compensation efforts is also necessary.

Lastly, ongoing efforts to protect and promote Yazidi cultural and religious heritage are crucial to preserving their history and traditions for future generations. Enhanced collaboration between federal, regional, and international bodies is vital to effectively addressing these challenges and ensuring coordinated and impactful actions.

In conclusion, our commitment to the Yazidi community must remain steadfast. By addressing these challenges with urgency and dedication, we honor the resilience of the Yazidi people and uphold the values of justice, human dignity, and solidarity. Let us work together to build a future where such atrocities are not only acknowledged but addressed, and where the Yazidi community can find peace and restoration.

Thank you for your attention and commitment to this critical cause.