

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

20 June 2016

UN Recognizes Yazidi Genocide

New York – On June 16th, the UN Commission of Inquiry (COI) on Syria concluded that ISIS is committing genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes against the Yazidi people. The report, “[They Came to Destroy](#)”: [ISIS Crimes Against the Yazidis](#), recognizes that the genocide is ongoing and is being committed not just through mass killings but also through gendered non-killing crimes such as rape and sexual violence.

“The report confirms not only that over 3,200 women and children remain in captivity, but that they are daily subjected to genocidal acts,” says [Global Justice Center](#) (GJC) president Janet Benshoof, “it’s time for the international community to act on its obligations under the Genocide Convention to prevent, suppress, and punish genocide.”

In December 2015, GJC sent a [brief](#) to the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in support of [Yazda](#) and [Free Yazidi](#) Foundation’s [submission](#), asking the ICC to investigate ISIS’s gender-based crimes against Yazidi women and girls.

“As our submission stated and the COI’s report confirms, genocide is being carried out along sharply divided gender lines,” says Benshoof. “Any actions to prevent and punish these genocidal acts must take into account the role that gender plays in the way genocide is being carried out.”

The [Bar Human Rights Committee of England and Wales](#) has been working since the summer of 2015 to raise awareness of the genocide of the Yazidis and breaches of international human rights law. Kirsty Brimelow QC, Chair:

“The ongoing genocide of the Yazidi people is one of the worst crimes of our time. Human rights are global and States are obliged to protect the Yazidis from further killings and sexual enslavement. To date, no State has started investigations with a view to prosecuting those concerned in this genocide and no court has seized jurisdiction. The World can no longer watch this carnage and international law must be implemented.”

The COI urges the international community, including the United Nations and its member states, to act on its obligations under the Genocide Convention as a matter of urgency. This must include measures to rescue and save women and children currently in ISIS captivity and hold states and individuals accountable.

“Genocide prosecutions are enormously important to deter and delegitimize ISIS atrocities,” says Benshoof. “All captured ISIS fighters should be investigated for genocide crimes, including crimes of rape, abduction, and sexual slavery against Yazidi women and girls. These women and girls deserve justice. Naming the crimes is an important first step, but there must be more. There must be action and prosecutions.”

For more information contact:

Stephanie Olszewski (New York), Global Justice Center, solszewski@globaljusticecenter.net +1.212.725.6530 ext. 211
Ed Gillett (London), Bar Human Rights Committee of England and Wales, coordination@barhumanrights.org.uk
+44 (0) 7754 197862