



OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON  
**SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN CONFLICT**

**Press Release**

**Two years after ISIL's attacks on Sinjar, Iraq, United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Zainab Hawa Bangura, demands justice and support for the victims**

**New York, 3 August 2016:** Two years ago today, on 3 August 2014, fighters from the terrorist group known as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)/Da'esh attacked the Sinjar region of Northern Iraq. ISIL has waged a widespread and systemic campaign of sexual and gender-based violence, unseen and unimaginable in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, against the Yazidi population, and other minority groups such as the Turkmen Shia, Shia Shabak and Christian communities, causing countless civilians to flee their homes.

During the attacks on Sinjar, young Yazidi women and girls were separated from the elderly by their captors. Elderly women and men were brutally killed and the young women and girls were forcibly transferred and sold into sexual slavery; priced on the basis of their age, appearance and virginity. These women and girls, sold as chattels of ISIL, have been raped and abused continuously in the hands of their captors. The pattern of abduction, rape, sexual slavery, forced marriage, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, and human trafficking, instituted by ISIL more than two years ago, continues to this day.

“When I visited Iraq in 2015, I heard stories of sexual violence that shook me to my core. Yazidi girls described being registered on lists, sold in modern-day slave markets, and then raped by fighters. There is no doubt in my mind that ISIL targeted Yazidis for sexual violence with the intent to destroy the Yazidi population. Right now, there are thousands of Yazidis, including women and girls, still missing.”

“There are major military campaigns against ISIL underway, but now more than ever, we need a true international justice process for these crimes – one that has the confidence of the victims, the people of Iraq, and the international community,” said Bangura. “Such a justice process will be another effective tool to degrade ISIL’s capabilities, while reaffirming the dignity and humanity of their victims.”

Special Representative Bangura also stated that: “Yazidi women and girls, and other victims of ISIL’s atrocities remain in urgent need of humanitarian assistance and social support”. In this regard, she called on all religious and community leaders in the region “to use their moral authority to help families and communities understand that the stigma and shame of rape always rests with the perpetrators, and never with the victims.”

“The extreme acts of sexual violence committed by ISIL cannot go unpunished,” said Special Representative Bangura. “Today, on the anniversary of the Sinjar attacks, we must renew our commitment to the women and girls who have suffered some of the most unspeakable atrocities of our time. We will not forget them. The international community stands united in the goal of pursuing the perpetrators and holding them to account.”

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