

Yazidi Slavery, Child Trafficking, Death Threats to Journalist: Should Turkey Remain in NATO?

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August 3 marked the fourth anniversary of the [ISIS invasion of Sinjar](#), Iraq and the start of the Yazidi genocide. Since that date in 2014, approximately 3,100 Yazidis either have been [executed or died](#) of dehydration and starvation, according to the organization Yazda. At least 6,800 women and children were kidnapped by ISIS terrorists and subjected to sexual and physical abuse, captives were forced to convert to Islam, and young boys were [separated](#) from their families and forced to become child soldiers, according to a [report](#) entitled "Working Against the Clock: Documenting Mass Graves of Yazidis Killed by the Islamic State." Moreover, 3,000 Yazidi women and girls are [believed to remain in ISIS captivity](#), but their whereabouts are unknown.

One Yazidi child recently sold in Ankara, Turkey, and then freed through the mediation efforts of Yazidi and humanitarian-aid organizations, according to a [report by Hale Gönültaş](#), a journalist with the Turkish news website *Gazete Duvar*. On July 30, three days after Gönültaş's article appeared, she received a death threat on her mobile phone from a Turkish-speaking man, who told her that he knew her home address, and then shouted, "Jihad will come to this land. Watch your step!"

This is not the first time that Gönültaş has been threatened for writing about ISIS atrocities. In May 2017, she received similar telephone threats after posting two articles: "200,000 children in ISIS camps," and "ISIS holds 600 children from Turkey."

In addition, a video of Turkish-speaking children receiving military training from ISIS was sent to her email address. In the video, in which one of them is seen cutting off someone's head with a knife, the children are saying, "We are here for jihad."

Gönültaş, whose lawyer has filed a criminal complaint about the threats, told Gatestone:

"A child has been sold, and this is a crime against humanity; and I do not think the sole perpetrator is ISIS. There is a larger organized network involved in this. My report has further exposed this reality. I have been a journalist for 22 years and have been subjected to similar threats many times. I do not live in fear or worry. I will continue reporting facts."

In her [article](#), Gönültaş conducted an interview with Azad Barış, founding president of the Yazidi Cultural Foundation, who said that a Yazidi girl, who was taken captive during the ISIS invasion of Sinjar in 2014, was sold for a fee determined by ISIS through "intermediaries" in

Ankara:

“To restore the child to liberty, the Yazidi community and humanitarian aid organizations — the ‘reliable intermediaries’ who stepped in to save the child — contacted the intermediaries who acted on behalf of ISIS.... The child was then taken out of Turkey quickly with the help of international organizations and reunited with her family. As far as I know, Turkish security forces were not informed of the incident. The priority was the life of the child and to take her to safety swiftly. And the child did get safely reunited with her family.”

Bariş also said that Yazidi women were exposed to mass rapes at the hands of ISIS terrorists who called them “spoils of war” and claimed that it was “religiously permissible” (“jaiz” in Arabic) to rape them:

“Women were taken from one cell house to another and were exposed to the same sexual and psychological torture in every house. According to witness statements, women were mass raped by ISIS militants three times every day. Dozens of women ended their lives by noosing and strangling themselves with their headscarves.

“Slave markets have been formed on an internet platform known as the ‘deep web.’ Not only women but also children are sold on auctions on the deep web... When the selling is completed on the internet, the intermediaries of those buying the women and the intermediaries of ISIS meet at a place considered ‘safe’ by both parties. Women and children are delivered to their buyers. Some Yazidi families have liberated their wives, children and relatives through the help of the reliable persons that joined in the auctions on the deep web on their behalf. The price for liberating the women and children ranges between 5,000 and 25,000 euros... Our missing people are still largely held by ISIS. Wherever ISIS is, and wherever they are effective, the women and children are mostly there. But selling women is not heard of very often anymore.”

Also according to Bariş, the second largest Yazidi group held captive by ISIS are boys under the age of nine:

“[they] receive jihadist education at the hands of ISIS; are brainwashed, and have been made to change their religion. Each of them is raised as a jihadist. But we are not fully informed of the exact number and whereabouts of our kidnapped children.”

This is not the first time that [the sale of Yazidis in Turkey](#) was reported in the media. In 2015, the German public television station ARD produced [footage](#) documenting the slave trade being conducted by ISIS through a liaison office in the province of Gaziantep in southeast Turkey, near the Syrian border.

In 2016, the Turkish daily *Hürriyet* [reported](#) that the Gaziantep police had raided the Gaziantep office and found \$370,000, many foreign (non-Turkish) passports, and 1,768 pages of Arabic-language receipts that demonstrate the transfer of millions of dollars between Syria and Turkey.

Six Syrians were indicted in Turkey for their involvement, but [all were acquitted](#) due to a “lack of evidence.” No member of the Gaziantep Bar Association, which had filed the

criminal complaint against them, was invited to attend the hearings. According to Mehmet Yalçinkaya, a lawyer and member of the Gaziantep Bar Association:

“The court, without looking into the documents found by police, made the decision to acquit... We learned of the decision to acquit by coincidence. That the trial ended in only 16 days and 1,768 pages of documents were submitted to the court after the decision to acquit shows that it was not an effective trial.”



A news report from German broadcaster ARD shows photos of Yazidi slaves distributed by ISIS (left), as well as undercover footage of ISIS operatives in Turkey taking payment for buying the slaves (right).

(Source: Gatestone Institute)

[Addressing](#) the US House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee on December 9, 2015, Mirza Ismail, founder and chairman of the Yezidi Human Rights Organization-International, [said, in part](#):

“We Yezidis are desperate for your immediate help and support. During our six-thousand-year history, Yezidis have faced 74 genocides in the Middle East, including the ongoing genocide. Why? Simply because we are not Muslims. We are an ancient and proud people from the heart of Mesopotamia, the birth place of civilization and the birth place of many of the world’s religions. And here we are today, in 2015, on the verge of annihilation. In response to our suffering around the World there is profound, obscene silence. We Yezidis are considered ‘Infidels’ in the eyes of Muslims, and so they are encouraged to kill, rape, enslave, and convert us.”

...

“I am pleading with each and every one of you in the name of humanity to lend us your support at this crucial time to save the indigenous and peaceful peoples of the Middle East.”

Three years after this impassioned plea, Yazidis are still being enslaved and sold by ISIS, with Turkish involvement, while the life of the journalist who exposed the crime is threatened. Reuniting the kidnapped Yazidis with their families and bringing the

perpetrators to justice should be a priority of civilized governments worldwide, not only to help stop the persecution and enslavement of Yazidis, but also to defeat jihad.

The question is whether NATO member Turkey is a part of the solution or [part of the problem](#). Should Turkey, with the path it is on, be allowed even to remain a member of NATO?

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