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## Human Rights Council

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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development**

### **Written statement\* submitted by Society for Threatened Peoples, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[11 May 2017]

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\* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

## **No impunity in connection with genocide crimes against Yazidis**

“I am ashamed as a human being that we ignore their cries for help,” said Amal Clooney, a human rights lawyer who supports Nadia Murad, a UN Goodwill Ambassador and victim of the genocide crimes of Islamic State (IS) against the Yazidi people.

Even after nearly three years, the Yazidi women and men who became victims of IS are still waiting for justice. To date, none of the perpetrators or accomplices in the genocide crimes committed against the Yazidi people in August 2014 have been punished. Almost all of the Yazidis who were displaced by IS are now living in refugee camps in Iraqi Kurdistan, where at least two million refugees from Iraq and Syria have found shelter. Many Yazidis fled from Iraq and have found refuge abroad. For these Yazidis, there is no future in Iraq or Iraqi Kurdistan. The situation in the Sinjar (Shingal) region in the outer north-west of Iraq, from where about 400,000 Yazidis were expelled by IS at the beginning of August 2014, remains unstable, even though IS has meanwhile been driven out of the Yazidi homeland. Back in August 2014, the Turkish government had supported or tolerated IS in Syria and in Iraq, and the Turkish Airforce is now attacking positions of the forces that managed to save so many Yazidis from being killed by IS at that time. The STP had demanded the NATO states to condemn the Turkish airstrikes against the Kurdish and Yazidi positions in northern Iraq and Syria. The governments of the NATO states must not allow Turkey, as a NATO member, to attack the Kurdish fighters in Syria and Northern Iraq while they are involved in a bloody war against IS and other radical Islamists in the area of Raqqa and Mosul. Many Turkish and international media have identified Erdogan as a supporter of Islamist terrorism. The attacks of the Turkish air force against Kurdish positions are to be seen as direct support for IS. The government of NATO member Turkey claims to be fighting IS, but the actual aim is to put an end to the aspirations of the Kurds and other minorities to establish democracy, human rights, and minority rights both in Iraq and in Syria. This is why Turkey tolerated IS for years, allowing the radical Islamists to use the Turkish state territory as a retreat area. Apart from that, the government in Ankara also provided IS with weapons and ammunition.

The Turkish government must finally stop supporting the radical Islamist forces in Iraq and Syria! Instead, Turkey should support those who are trying to fight back IS. The Turkish government must also help to shed light upon the genocide crimes and to punish the perpetrators. The state territory of the Republic of Turkey was – and still is – the Islamist extremists’ main region of activity. Turkey has also served as a transit country for jihadists from all over the world who wanted to fight in Iraq or Syria or who returned to their home countries following the repeated defeats of IS.

### **The main victims of genocide are the Yazidi women**

Thousands of Yazidi women were kidnapped and raped by IS. This repulsive form of violence against women is probably one of the cruelest weapons of war known to mankind. IS is still holding about 3,200 Yazidi women hostage since August 2014. The Yazidis, especially the Yazidi women, were not involved in the armed conflicts in Iraq; they are merely innocent victims of the barbaric activities of IS. It is the Yazidi daughters, wives, and mothers who suffer the most from barbarism and the armed conflict in Iraq. All in all, there are about one million Yazidis – a religious minority that, ethnically, belongs to the Kurds. Apart from the fact that many of them are living in diaspora,

scattered all over the world, about 50 percent of the Yazidis lived in the Nineveh Plain in the Sinjar Mountains in northern Iraq. In the night of August 3, 2014, when IS carried out a hideous surprise attack on the Yazidis in their villages in northern Iraq, they kidnapped the women and children, and killed their husbands, fathers, and brothers right before their eyes. The United Nations published provisional figures regarding the massacre against the Yazidis, which is characterized as a genocide crime: at least 5,000 Yazidis got killed, up to 7,000 were abducted – and about 430,000 people from the Sinjar region are on the run.

After their abduction, the villagers were divided into three groups: women with children, married women, and virgins. The individual groups were taken to different locations. Almost every family has a female member that is in the hands of IS, and the families don't even know where they are held captive. Every day, night after night, the Yazidi women are raped by the murderers of their families, beaten bloody by their enemies, impregnated by those who destroyed their identities. Many are also sold to rich people or traders – from Saudi Arabia and Syria, for example – who keep them as slaves, for sexual or other services. The price from the women is determined by their appearance, their age, and other factors that may be of importance to a buyer. Some of them are not for sale; they are reserved for the terrorists themselves, and the IS fighters swap the Yazidi women among each other – as a “gift” for their services to Islamic State.

About 2,000 women and girls have so far managed to escape from their tormentors. They were either ransomed or used an opportunity to escape. More and more of them have informed the public about their atrocities and given interviews, which is also how the fate of three sisters from the Sinjar region had become known. The youngest of them, only 16 years old, was raped by four men before she was sold to a man from Saudi Arabia. Her two sisters Rana (25) and Sara (21) never saw their sister again. Rana and Sara were regularly raped by a Kazakh and a Russian.

The escapees reported about little girls who were harassed by a large bearded man, about forced marriage, torture, and ill-treatment, about forced conversion to Islam, about other women's successful and unsuccessful suicide attempts. They reported about women who are crying for their daughters, and about children who call for their mothers. One of the women concerned reported that the terrorists acted out cruel games: Thus, an Emir had prepared lots with the names of 14 female prisoners – and two IS-fighters were allowed to draw one lot each. Names were called out, and two girls were dragged into the back room, 15 and 18 years of age. The twelve other prisoners could hear them cry. The Emir laughed. When the girls returned 20 minutes later, they were covered in blood and were in a state of shock. They said that they have been raped. But it is not only the Yazidi women who suffer. In an interview, a young Yazidi woman who managed to escape the horror (Zeytun, 24) reported that a group of Shiite girls was doused with gasoline and burned when the terrorists raided their village.

Apart from the fact that the girls and women have to suffer immense physical pain and unimaginable emotional hardship, their fathers, husbands, and brothers are humiliated as well. This applies especially to cultures where a woman's “honor” is of major importance – and, in particular, the sexual aspect: virginity and a monogamous life. Most of the abductees are still held captive by IS. For the families of the women, knowing that a member of their family is constantly tortured means helplessness and powerlessness; the emotional and physical pain of the victim on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the awareness that the women are not to be blamed for the violation of

their honor. Therefore, this weapon of war works systematically and on several different levels. Thus, IS is directly and indirectly “collecting” masses of victims of physical and psychological torture. These crimes must be condemned and prevented in the future! Those who are responsible must be punished.

Society for Threatened Peoples calls on the members of the Human Rights Council to:

- Better protect the Yazidis, especially the women, in their homeland in the Sinjar region, but also outside Iraq. The Yazidis must no longer be persecuted by radical Islamists. The central government in Baghdad and the regional government of Kurdistan must do everything they can to ensure that the Yazidis will be able to trust the army and the police again.
- To recognize the genocide crimes as such – the perpetrators must be punished by Iraqi, Kurdish, and international courts.
- Call on all states, especially Turkey, to cooperate with the respective international agencies to find and punish the perpetrators.
- To call on the governments of Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and other countries that provided financial or other support for the radical Islamists, to establish a fund – involving the UN – to compensate the Yazidis and other victims of IS.
- Call on all to cooperate with the relevant investigating bodies and courts in order to find and bring the perpetrators to justice.

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