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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.

[03 June 2020]

* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.

Children born of genocidal rape in the Yazidi and Rohingya communities need to be recognized as victims of conflict in urgent need of support

In a few weeks, in August, the world will be commemorating the two most horrendous genocides of the last decade. August 3rd will mark the sixth anniversary of genocide against the Yazidis in Northern Iraq. August 25th will mark the third anniversary of genocide against the Rohingya in Myanmar.

The youngest victims of these genocides have thus far largely been forgotten: children born of conflict-related sexual violence. These “children born of war” suffer tremendously and largely in the shadows of the public.

In the Yazidi community, there are hundreds of such children (the exact number is unclear). They were born in or shortly after captivity by “ISIS” (Islamic State) to enslaved and raped Yazidi women and girls and “ISIS” fighters. The number of these children will likely increase further as there are almost 3,000 Yazidi women and girls still in captivity, many of whom probably have had children conceived in rape. Yazidi women who escaped captivity with a child face a difficult choice: they can either return to their community or keep their child. Returning to and living among the community with a child fathered by an “ISIS” fighter is difficult as it poses a security threat to the mothers and their families: the children are registered as Muslim under the patrilineal Iraqi laws on religious allegiance but Muslim children are not supposed to be raised by non-Muslims. Disregard of this rule could have dangerous consequences. Stigmatization of these children as “children of ISIS” as they are referred to by some as well as Yazidi traditions and collective trauma from the genocide are further reasons why the children are not being accepted. These children are stateless. Many of them are orphaned. Those who stay with their mothers live in precarious circumstances in the camps where they often have to conceal their Yazidi origin. Some mothers rejoin “ISIS” in order to avoid separation from their children. Many mothers who had to leave their children behind are traumatized. If these children are left to grow up in these precarious circumstances, severe psychological trauma, amongst other health and socio-economic struggles or even radicalization, will likely ensue.

In the Rohingya community, there are also hundreds to thousands of children conceived in sexual violence by Tatmadaw soldiers (the exact number is unclear). These children grow up in desperate circumstances in refugee camps in Bangladesh. While conditions in the camps are harsh for everyone, these children experience particular hardship. Due to the stigma attached to the circumstances of their conception, many mothers give their children up for informal adoption in the camps. These unwanted children are in imminent danger of being trafficked. Mothers who decide to keep their children often face ostracization by their families and communities, leaving them vulnerable to abuse, divorce and subsequent loss of social status and income. Unmarried mothers often are unable to get married, depriving them of a traditional source of security and income. Some mothers are forced into survival sex work. The children get referred to as “zoora fua” translating to “illegal children”; “mog”, a local term for “Myanmar army”; “bad blood”; “mongrel”; “children of the enemy”, among other derogatory names, indicating the severity of stigma faced by these children. If the situation remains unchanged, these children will probably face lives as outsiders with severe psychological trauma and socio-economic adversities and they will likely remain at risk of exploitation, abuse and radicalization.

Society for Threatened Peoples therefore calls upon the UN Human Rights Council to urge the Government of the Republic of Iraq to:

- combat statelessness of children born of war and change regulations and laws on compulsory registration of these children as Muslim;
- facilitate medical and psychological treatment for all sexual violence survivors and their children and provide community measures addressing stigma attached to children born of war.

Society for Threatened Peoples calls upon the UN Human Rights Council to urge the Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar to:

- stop sexual violence and all other crimes and human rights violations committed against the Rohingya.

Society for Threatened Peoples calls upon the UN Human Rights Council to urge the Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh to:

- protect children born of war in the refugee camps in Cox’s Bazar from human trafficking, abuse and exploitation;

- facilitate medicate and psychological treatment for all sexual violence survivors and their children and provide community measures addressing stigma attached to children born of war.

Society for Threatened Peoples calls upon the UN Human Rights Council to call on the international community to:

- support and intensify efforts to protect children born of war and all other survivors of the ongoing genocides against the Rohingya and Yazidis;
 - recognize children born of war as victims of armed conflict and genocide and include this group of victims in all considerations regarding humanitarian aid, justice initiatives and diplomatic relations with all concerned states and in all contexts of wartime rape or widespread sexual violence.
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