



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

Ten years after the Sinjar attacks, UN Special Representative Patten calls the international community to ensure that the voices and plight of survivors are not forgotten and to redouble efforts for justice, accountability and continued support

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New York, 2 August 2024: A decade since Da'esh tried to wipe out the Yazidi people in the Sinjar region in northern Iraq, the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict (SRSG-SVC), Ms. Pramila Patten, calls on the international community to ensure that the plight of Yazidis and other affected minorities remains at the center of policy discussions. On 3 August 2014, Da'esh attacked Sinjar, massacred thousands of men, abducted 6,417 Yazidis and subjected women and girls to different forms of brutal sexual violence, including rape and sexual slavery. A decade later, survivors from the Yazidi and other communities in Iraq are still demanding tailored support to heal and rebuild their lives, as well as justice, accountability for the perpetrators and guarantees of non-repetition.

To date, 2,847 Yazidi remain missing, in addition to an unknown number of missing persons from other communities. Many survivors are likely still held in captivity or detention and may not disclose their identity due to fears of retaliation and being separated from their children. There is also a grave concern that Yazidi children are among the missing and may not know or remember their identity because they were too young at the time of abduction, were forcibly separated from their families or were born as a result of sexual violence.

Due to prevailing insecurity, the lack of basic services and limited job opportunities in Sinjar, many survivors and their families are unable to return to their ancestral homeland in a safe and dignified way. However, in 2021, a major milestone for transitional justice was achieved in Iraq, with the adoption of the Law on Support to Female Yazidi Survivors. "The Yazidi Survivor's Law is a strong sign of progress and commitment by the Iraqi government to the plight of survivors from the Yazidi, Turkmen, Shabak and Christian communities", SRSG Patten said. To date, the law has allowed some 1,600 survivors to receive monthly reparation payments, as well as for the allocation of 262 plots of land to survivors. But more needs to be done to address survivor's needs and rights. "The government and international community should scale-up efforts to rebuild survivor's homelands and ensure the availability of services, including trauma-sensitive mental health services, education, and income generation opportunities", Special Representative Patten added.

Survivors of sexual violence perpetrated by Da'esh are still also waiting to see justice and accountability. However, perpetrators continue to be tried only for their affiliation with this terrorist organization, rather than for the crimes committed. "The fight against impunity must be a priority to guarantee these crimes will never happen again", SRSG Patten commented. "There can be no meaningful peace without reconciliation, no reconciliation without justice and no justice without accountability. My Office stands ready to support the government of Iraq in these important efforts."

The extreme brutality waged by Da'esh against the Yazidi community represents a dark moment in Iraq's history and must never be forgotten. SRSG Patten continues to stand in solidarity with all survivors in their quest for justice, reintegration and healing.

For media inquiries, please contact:

Ms. Géraldine Boezio, Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict

Tel: +1 917 367 3306 Email: geraldine.boezio@un.org

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