

Women tell of horrific Isis abuse

By Heather Saul

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Yazidis released this week say they were raped in public, sold as sex slaves.



Yazidis released by Islamic State group militants rest as they arrive in Kirkuk, 180 miles (290 kilometers) north of Baghdad. Photo / AP

Yazidi women released by Isis (Islamic State) this week were gang-raped in public by fighters and tortured by their captors, according to distressing accounts of their ordeals.

Hundreds of women and children were abducted from the town of Sinjar, in northern Iraq, and held hostage by Isis for over eight months. Some were sold to fighters as sex slaves or given as "prizes". Many were beaten and forced to convert to Islam.

More than 200 were released by fighters in Himera, near Kirkurk, this week. They have told harrowing tales of the physical and sexual abuse they suffered at the hands of their captors.

Ziyad Shammo Khalaf, who works with the Yazda organisation to support Yazidi victims, said children were separated from their mothers and "distributed among houses" in Mosul and Tal Afar.

"If you come and sit with the girls you will find different stories from girl to girl. A lot of them have been sold to Isis fighters, they have been raped in ...

public, and by more than two or three people at a time," he told the *International Business Times*. "They were tortured, beaten and subject to any type of violence."

Other Yazidi survivors have also given disturbing accounts of their treatment by Isis, with one woman describing how militants were forcing hostages to give their blood for transfusions.

The atrocities endured by Yazidi sex slaves was exposed more fully in an 87-page report released by Amnesty International in November 2014, which found girls and women were repeatedly raped and sold as sex slaves.

The report found that even children were being sold to Isis fighters or given as "gifts".

Isis considers Yazidis heretical and published an article in its propaganda magazine Dabiq attempting to justify the practice of selling them using theological rulings of early Islam.

However, experts say the practice has caused friction among the ranks of the extremist group. Sajad Jiyad, Research Fellow and Associate Member at the Iraqi Institute for Economic Reform, told the *Independent* that many supporters had been in denial about the trafficking of kidnapped Yazidi women until the Dabiq article was published.

The Yazidis

- Religious sect found in northern Iraq, Syria and the Caucasus
- Religion incorporates elements of many faiths, including Zoroastrianism
- Principal divine figure, Malak Taus (Peacock Angel), is the supreme angel of the seven angels who ruled the universe after God created it
- Many Muslims and other groups incorrectly view Yazidis as devil worshippers
- There are estimated to be around 500,000 Yazidis worldwide

Nine year old Yazidi girl sold gang raped by 10 IS men now pregnant

A Yazidi woman released by Isis militants arrives in Kirkuk, 290 kilometers north of Baghdad.,
Photo / AP

A nine-year-old girl who was taken as a sex slave by Isis was raped by 10 militants and is now pregnant, it has been reported.

According to an aid worker, the girl is a member of the Yazidi Christian minority religious group, which faces persecution across Isis-held territory.

She has been flown out of Iraq by a Kurdish aid agency, the *Toronto Star* reported, and is now being treated by a medical charity in Germany.

But Yousif Daoud, a Canada-based aid worker who has just returned from the region, told the *Star* the girl was "mentally and physically traumatised" after the abuse she had suffered, and there are fears she may yet not survive her ordeal.

"This girl is so young she could die if she delivers a baby," he said. "Even a caesarian section is dangerous."

When she was found the girl "was in very bad shape", Daoud said. "She was sexually abused

by no fewer than 10 men. Most of them were front-line fighters or suicide bombers who are given girls as a reward."

Isis released 216 Yazidis on Wednesday after holding them captive for eight months, in a mass release that some see as a sign of the increasing pressures put on the militants by US-led air strikes and an Iraqi ground offensive.

But Daoud, speaking under a pseudonym, gave a very different reason for Isis to release women and girls who its militants have already abused.

He said they faced the stigma of lost chastity among the conservative Yazidi society.

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The kidnapped nine-year-old girl was among hundreds of kidnapped girls and women who had made their way back to Kurdish-controlled land prior to Wednesday's release.

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The handover took place in Himera just southwest of Kirkuk, 290 kilometers north of Baghdad, and there were emotional scenes as they were checked over by peshmerga field doctors.

Some suggested they were led to believe they were being taken for execution when piled onto buses by Isis. "We are very happy now," said Mahmoud Haji, one of the released Yazidis. "We were worried that they were taking us to Syria and Raqqa."

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon welcomed the release, his spokesman said.

Stephane Dujarric said: "Obviously, any release of innocent civilians is to be welcomed and I think one couldn't help but being moved by the pictures."

- Independent