

Beat: Politics

Yazidis bear witness to violence by Islamic State

Call for help

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USPA NEWS - Killed, enslaved, forced to flee: Iraq's Yazidi minority has found itself on the receiving end of Islamic State (IS) ever since the jihadist organisation started conquering territory in Syria and Iraq.

Representatives of the Yazidis made a plea for support during a meeting with Parliament President Martin Schulz. Vian Dakhil, the only Yazidi Kurd member of Iraq's parliament, told him: "We seek help in releasing the 5,000 Yazidi women, elderly men and children who have been kidnapped by IS." Some of the Yazidis visiting Schulz in Strasbourg on 29 April had first-hand experience of the atrocities.

Dilyar Saeed witnessed how last year Islamic State took over her village in the Sinjar Mountains and killed 1,700 villagers: "Men were separated from women and taken to be executed. All women were captured and some were sexually abused." Nearly all of her relatives were killed by Islamic State, while she was held captive by them for more than two months. Saeed pleaded for the EU to recognise "the genocide that has been perpetrated against Yazidis"^[?].

Also at the meeting was Aisha Taha Othman, an 89-year-old old who lost three sons in the fight against Islamic State. She said: "It is important that we get the necessary weapons as well as medical help in the EU for gravely wounded Peshmerga fighters." Her surviving son Khorsheed Mawlud highlighted the need to counter the threat posed by Islamic State: "On behalf of the people of Kurdistan we are here to demand that Europe gives us more sophisticated weapons to enable us to defend our dignity and land." He called Islamic State "a barbaric force with no respect for human rights which has committed grave atrocities against Yazidi Kurds and against Christians."

Violence against minorities such as the Yazidis has increased dramatically in areas of Iraq that have fallen under the control of Islamic State. At the beginning of May it was reported that several hundred Yazidi captives had been killed by IS militants. Vian Dakhil, the only Yazidi Kurd member of Iraq's Parliament, met President Martin Schulz and pleaded for "humanitarian assistance for the 420,000 Yazidi refugees in the Kurdistan region". In addition to asking for help in releasing the 5,000 Yazidis still being held, she also said: "We must also provide psychological assistance to girls who have escaped from IS following rape and enslavement."

Meeting the Yazidi representatives, President Schulz described himself as "very moved" and said that "we support their cause and relentless fight against impunity." He also reiterated that freedom of religion is non-negotiable and highlighted the importance of documenting testimonies. The European Parliament is aware of the threat that the IS represents to security in Europe and in particular in the Mediterranean area.

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