

## Shireen Jerdo Ibrahim's Testimony

Ladies and gentlemen, Members of Congress, thank you for inviting me.

My name is Shireen Jerdo Ibrahim and I am 31 years old. I am one of the thousands of Yazidi survivors. I grew up in Rambusi village, close to Sinjar town, South side of Mount Sinjar. Prior to August 2014, I was living a simple life with my family in our rural area, however, ISIS came and took over our homeland after the withdrawal of Kurdish Peshmerga forces.

On August 3<sup>rd</sup> 2014, my sister with her children were visiting us and we were preparing to celebrate our mid-summer feast (festival), when I heard the sound of gun-shots from Gerzarak, Seba Sheikh Khider and Tel-Azer (Yazidi complexes, Southern Sinjar), I called my cousin and my uncle, they said that Peshmerga security forces withdrew from the area and that ISIS has attacked our towns. My relatives advised us to escape.

We prepared some stuff and locked the doors of our house. Then we all got into our little pick-up truck and headed toward Sinjar Mountain. By the time we arrived at the foothills of the Mountain, our vehicle broke down, we decided to continue on foot. While we were walking along the road, three cars loaded with ISIS militants arrived and stopped us, they asked all of us to give up weapons and cell phones. I turned off my phone immediately and putted it inside my sock. My family and I among many other Yazidi families were arrested by ISIS and moved to a wedding hall near Sinjar city.

We were ordered and threatened by ISIS militants to get off the trucks they had loaded us into. After we stepped out of the trucks, the militants shot three bullets into a young Yazidi man's head killing him because he said he wanted to wait for his family to arrive. Our tragedy began from here as they moved all the abducts to the government office inside Sinjar district. ISIS militants separated Yazidi girls for the rest of us by force. My sister, Sahera, was about 15 years old and she was the second girl that was taken. Her hand was in my hand and she was throwing up and crying. She was wearing a dress I had made for her, I was crying and begging them to not take her. One of the militants hit my back with his weapon. Then they forced us all into buses and took us to Badoosh jail.

The jail smelled dirty and there was blood everywhere on the floor. While were all crammed together and terrified, the jail was targeted by US coalition airstrike. As a result, they moved us to Tal-Afar district where ISIS leaders who are responsible for our kidnapping and selling were there. One of them called Haji Mahdi who is from Tel afar and another called Abu Ali from Mosul. I recognized Abu Ali on television when he was escaping from Talafar among IDPs where he was interviewed on Kurdish TV (Rudaw). He is responsible for separating me from my family and selling and enslaving me with many other Yazidi girls. I heard that he now lives in IDPs camp close to Mosul and there is no one to punish him for his crimes against me and against Yazidi

community. There are thousands of ISIS militants like Abu Ali who committed crimes against Yazidis and today, they are free without punishment.

From Tel -afar I was sold to a person from Raqa city in Syria, In Raqa they tortured me because I refused to talk. From Raqa they sold me again to a person from Mosul city. I was sold and bought as a cheap commodity for more than five times. Some girls were sold as cheap as few dollars. I spend nine months in captivity under ISIS; it was like hell. They performed an abdominal surgery on me while in Mosul city and until now, I am suffering from the effects of it. I don't know why they operated on me or what kind of a procedure was done on my body. They committed all kinds of atrocious crimes against us including mass killing, sexual enslavement, and forced conversion.

Today as I speak here before you, 19 members of my family and my relatives are missing. They may be killed or still in captivity but we don't know anything about them. Many countries including United states and the United Nations recognized the Yazidi genocide, however our hope was there will be steps following that to provide justice and protection for my people. We are still waiting for action and the liberation of thousands of Yazidis from ISIS captivity. Today, in the liberated areas of Yazidi homeland, there are more than 40 mass graves.

Our homes and lives were destroyed by ISIS, however, we still hope that our homeland will be re-built, so that Yazidis, Christians and other minorities can find peace again, because this was our ancient homeland where we once co-existed as brothers and sisters.

In conclusion, I want to let you know of one thing which I hope you will take serious measures to consider; Yazidis, Christians and other religious minorities, especially the non-Muslim minorities, cannot survive in Syria and Iraq under the current conditions. Without serious action from you and the world governments many of these people will continue to flee their ancient homelands of Syria and Iraq. The protection of these minorities means that one day, my people will not become extinct.

Thank you