Sexual Violence, Identity and Gender: ISIS and the Yezidis[1]

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Abstract

This paper explores the gender dimension of the relationship between the political marketplace and identity formation. Gender is a central, not tangential, component of violence and gender norms are an essential part of singular and exclusive identity formation. The article focuses on ISIS's sexual and gender-based violence against the Yezidis and contextualises this case within wider long-term gender- and identity-based structural inequalities that facilitate sexual violence in conflict. Structural inequalities are understood here within a continuum of violence and through an intersectional study of sexual violence in conflict. In the case of ISIS and the Yezidis, specific ethnic or religious constructions of identity intersected with gender, leading to targeting of a minority community. This identity formation is part of becoming a militarised masculine warrior within a group – ISIS used sexual violence in forming its group identity against a subordinated outgroup. In doing this, ISIS objectified and commodified the bodies of the Yezidi women and created an economic market around this. Objectification and commodification of Yezidi women reinforced ISIS's hegemonic and militant masculinity. The construction of identity through sexual violence took place in a socio-economic and political context situated within a long-term history of the intersection of gender and identity-based hierarchies. This was possible because of the existing repertoires of values, perceptions and practices of hegemonic and militant masculinity. The organisation and institutionalisation of sexual violence and objectification and commodification of Yezidi women and girls was based on this repertoire which was based on intersectional hierarchies of gender and religious-ethnic-sectarian identities.

Keywords: gender, violence, sexual violence, conflict, identity, commodification, intersectionality

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Introduction

In the summer of 2014, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) executed thousands of Yezidis in the Sinjar area and seized large numbers of women and children as hostages. At least 10,000 Yezidis were killed or kidnapped.[1] Those that managed to escape the attacks were displaced and the vast majority are still living in displacement camps scattered around Iraqi Kurdistan, albeit a small number moved to Western countries as refugees. What is more, several thousand Yezidis remain unaccounted for and the task of identifying and documenting bodies, including in mass graves, continues. Most displaced Yezidis have no intention of returning to their home province of Sinjar given their traumatic experiences and their lack of confidence in efforts to reconstruct and securitise the area and the lack of progress in bringing justice.[2]

ISIS's attacks against the Yezidis revealed once again the centrality of gender in politics of violence. Sexual violence can be used as a deliberate and systematic tool in acts of genocide and ethnic cleansing against religious and ethnic minorities in several contexts.[3] Groups such as ISIS justify violence by using specific gender norms in intersection with perceptions and prejudices towards specific religious or ethnic groups.[4] ISIS justified its treatment of the Yezidis by defining them as non-believers (*mushrik*) and a 'pagan' minority. On the other hand, it considered Christians and Jews as 'people of the book' and immune from certain practices during war. By defining Yezidis as a *mushrik* community, ISIS theologically justified the killing of Yezidi men if they do not convert to Islam and the abduction, rape, selling and 'enslavement' of Yezidi women and girls.[5] After their capture, the Yezidi women and children were shared amongst ISIS fighters or were transferred to the ISIS authorities to be divided as 'profit' (*khum*).[6] Captured Yezidi women and girls lived under circumstances in which they had no choice in anything and they were entirely stripped off their ability to control their lives, bodies and dignity.

The Yezidi community's own gender norms, especially the embodiment of men's and families' 'honour' in women's bodies, made these attacks particularly destructive for the community. Community gender norms were used as a tool by ISIS to discourage abducted Yezidi women from escaping. Some of the survivors reported that their captives told them

that if they returned to their communities they would be killed, referring to the practice of 'honour' killing, or would not be accepted back by their communities.[7] The Yezidis, including their leaders, consider sexual violence perpetrated by ISIS against Yezidi women and girls as an attack against the whole community. As Prince Tahsin, the prince (*mir*) of the Yezidis for 7 decades who died in 2019, stated, his community could possibly have reconciled and gone back to living with their Arab neighbours; but because ISIS not only killed but also abducted and raped thousands of Yezidi women and girls, this would make it very hard to reconcile.[8] Their experiences at the hands of ISIS left lasting scars for the Yezidi community and led to extreme levels of trauma and deep resentment both at individual and community levels.[9]

Sexual and gender-based violence played an important role in the identity formation of ISIS and its hierarchical differentiation of the 'citizens of the Islamic State' from other communities. This identity formation took place at group level where sexual violence became part of becoming a hyper-masculine ISIS warrior in a society built around male patriarchal supremacy. The general public has been mainly interested in the cruelties ISIS committed and the experiences of the Yezidis without reference to the wider inequalities and structural context within which this violence took place and considered ISIS's violence as 'unique' in its brutality.[10] The historical and structural gendered factors in social, political and economic relations creates the context for particular individuals or identity groups to be targeted over others and enables understanding sexual violence as part of a continuum of violence.[11] Indeed, ISIS's sexual violence reflects the Iraqi state's previous practice of establishing its ethno-sectarian domination; ISIS built on these and created new gendered and religious hierarchies.[12] Categorical and institutionalised hierarchies utilised in the governance of communities since the Ottoman period have shaped relations between Yezidis and their local, imperial or state authorities and the majority identity groups they represent. These provided a repertoire of norms and practices for ISIS in identifying gendered identity demarcations and hierarchies, and help historicise and contextualise ISIS's extreme.[13] Here, a conception of communal identity that emphasise institutions, socio-economic structures and political processes, rather than as innate and given is adopted.[14] Explanations based on culture and identity lead to limited and tautological assumptions essentialise and freeze perceptions of identities and obstruct informed analysis, erase the history of political and social processes and overlook the complexity of the moral systems.[15]

The paper first delineates historically how states governed the Yezidi community and the wider gender and identity hierarchies and violences that provided the 'habitus' for ISIS's sexual violence against Yezidi women. It teases out the historical continuities in violent politics situated at the intersection of gender- and identity-based hierarchies in Iraq and ISIS's violent and sexual commodification of the Yezidi women's bodies. It is important to note here that the degree and experience of gendered inequality in Iraq varies historically, and the experiences of Yezidi women and men differ geographically and based on urban-rural, ethnoreligious and socio-economic background. Therefore, references to women's or specific minority communities' experiences mentioned throughout the article do not mean to generalise these experiences to all Iraqi women or all of the Yezidi community.

The paper then delineates and draws parallels between the repertoires of sexual and identity-based violences in Iraq's history and in ISIS's sexual violence, and finally discusses ISIS's objectification and commodification of Yezidi women and then links this to scholarly discussions on sexual objectification and on the relationship between structural gender inequalities, identity-based hierarchies and sexual violence in conflict in Iraq. It argues that what underlies the commodification of Yezidi women's and girls' bodies are hegemonic and militant masculinities built on structural and institutionalised long-term gender-based violence enmeshed with institutionalised identity-based hierarchies.

Structural gender inequality as a cause of sexual violence in conflict

In the last decade, studies explaining the relationship between conflict, violence and gender expanded on the work of scholars such as Enloe, Sjoberg and Carpenter.[16] This literature challenged the idea that sexual and gender-based violence is a by-product of conflict and is inevitable, and instead considered it as a strategy to acquire and maintain power, influence and resources – such as Cohen's focus on the individual or community-based determinants, dynamics and hierarchies, Farr's emphasis on the motivational or ideological factors and Wood's use of instrumental and strategic factors to explain sexual violence.[17] On the other hand, feminist scholars also adopted a different causal explanation. Instead of only focusing on the individual and group perpetrator dynamics that fuel sexual violence, they tried to grasp the full picture of why it happens in conflict and the context in which it takes place. After all, even the individual motivation or organisational goals and

strategies are shaped and socially constructed within a wider normative, political, economic and social context that is highly gendered and subject to the dynamics of identity formation and change.[18]

Wider gendered socio-political, historical and economic structures that create hierarchies, insecurities and discriminations in society play a larger-than-assumed role in leading to sexual and gender-based violence in conflict. Sexual violence is only one of multiple ways in which gender violence manifests itself. Extremes of cruelty and violence are not stand-alone incidents and considering them as such overlooks the underlying and facilitating factors behind such incidents. In that sense, sexual and gender-based violence is part of a spectrum of patriarchal, discriminative and unequal structures, norms and institutions that shape women's everyday lives and sanction male aggression. Sexual violence is situated in the continuities between war and peace, amongst the varying categories of violence, such as gender-based harassment, limitations to mobility, rape and murder.[19] In a similar vein, recent work on ISIS's sexual violence, such as Al-Ali and Ahram, provide analyses that emphasise wider historical gendered socio-political, historical and economic structures that create identity-based hierarchies, insecurities and discriminations in Iraqi society.[20]

Indeed, understanding the context helps to explain why sexual violence is widespread in certain wars against specific groups but not others. It also enables going beyond explanations that simply focus on cultural and religious norms linked to patriarchy. Because that context perpetuates hierarchies of identity and gender.[21] ISIS's gender- and religion-based violence had precedents in the prevalent norms and practices that intersected with ethnic, religious and sectarian identities and gender in the early years of the Iraqi state, under the Ba'ath regime and in the post-2003 Iraq.[22] A key outcome of this was the commodification and objectification of the Yezidi women and girls, as well as women and girls from other minority groups.

This article tries to delineate how these wider structures led to the objectification and commodification of Yezidi women's and girls' bodies. Examining the gendered nature of the political economy of contemporary conflicts reveals important insights into the dynamics of hegemonic masculinity and prejudices embedded in identity politics. To fund and sustain their wars, armed groups as well as states try to create new 'political marketplace' systems,

defined as the ability of rulers and clients to exert power and manage political-military dynamics through gaining, managing and holding power.[23] Armed groups rely on civilians and need the material and human resources available in communities to maintain and support themselves and their wars. They develop a political and economic project to exercise power over populations and use a type of violence justified through ideological, moral and gendered norms.[24] They use violence, looting, informal taxation, kidnapping, trading in drugs, oil, and arms, sex-trafficking, human trafficking, and illicit resource extraction to finance themselves and this affects women both directly and indirectly in their daily lives and in disproportionate and different ways.[25]

Armed groups depend on terror as a means of controlling territories and communities and using violence against civilians as a deliberate strategy, and sexual violence is one of the ways of 'manhandling' civilians.[26] Armed groups mobilise, interact with other groups and maintain their power through performances of masculinities and femininities in the political and economic landscape they act. Sexual violence is, in fact, central to controlling and governing communities through delineating, oppressing, marginalising and privileging certain groups over others. Therefore, gender and gender-related dimensions are key to understanding how armed groups organise, interact with other actors and maintain themselves. Armed groups depend on women for various purposes – fighters, sexual companions, workers, porters, spies, cooks, cleaners. For instance, the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda and armed groups in Sierra Leone kidnapped girls and women and used them in sexual, military and logistical roles to maintain their war systems.[27] In Sierra Leone, abducted women that later became commanders' wives were key to the operation of the forces as they controlled the distribution of the loot and supervised operations when their captor-husbands were away.[28]

Military actors valorise hegemonic masculinity and present protecting 'women and children' as a key motivation and justification for their resort to armed conflict (which actually also serves to incentivise the targeting of women to disempower the other side).[29] This idea is prevalent in the way international system functions; war amplifies states' masculine characteristics, emphasising men as decision-makers and implementers, and women as innocents, dependents and victims.[30] Such a perception also leads to the targeting of women to show the weakness and inability of the enemy men to protecting 'their' women, therefore emasculating them.[31] Arguably all state-based societies (and the state system itself)

as well as non-state armed groups, are to a varying degree patriarchal and valorise hegemonic and militant masculinity. These masculinities translate into specific forms of sexual violence in conflict – although not all conflicts entail systematic sexual violence as a strategy – the commodification of sexual violence and objectification of women's bodies in general are central factors.

Violence is legitimised and constructed within a social context and the presence of institutionalised gender discrimination provides permissive conditions for sexual violence. The scale of sexual violence in conflict is significantly higher in countries with higher levels of gender discrimination, therefore extreme forms of gendered discrimination and sexual violence can should be seen as part of a continuum of violence.[32] Whatever the underlying ideology or strategic purpose behind sexual violence in conflict, gendered hierarchies and inequalities at family society levels, and in socioeconomic and political institutions, shape the practices of gendered violence.[33] These institutions, or 'twilight institutions' as defined by Lund, change and adapt to frame the situations and habitus. Habitus, socialised norms or tendencies that guide behaviour and thinking, serves as a normative script defining what practice, hierarchy and order are legitimate.[34] In conflict, hegemonic and militant forms of masculinities can become prevalent and rendered as ordinary, despite the fact that they are contested by many in society. In that sense, sexual and gendered violence, including rape, also becomes 'normalised' as it operates to reassert hegemonic masculinity. For instance, gang-rape serves as a bonding function for groups of men, strengthens loyalty and helps them assert their masculinity.[35] Similarly, the rape of men also serves to assert hegemonic masculinity as it is seen as an act of 'emasculation' and humiliation.[36]

Underlying power structures that keep women subordinate to men and at the bottom of the hierarchy have been inherent in the political and socio-economic structures and institutions in Iraq. Structural violence and hegemonic masculinity cannot on their own explain the sexual violence perpetrated by ISIS against Yezidis and other minorities groups. As Alison argues, "widespread, often systematic and orchestrated … wartime rape needs to be more complicated."[37] Therefore, dynamics of identity politics and how they are connected to sexual violence in conflict are also key to understand. The intersection of gendered hierarchies with citizenship hierarchies serves to justify the dehumanisation of certain groups over others and the sexual objectification of their bodies. The intersection of gender with ethnicity or religious identity is a significant factor in all wars, especially in ethno-national

and sectarian conflicts.[38] Militant radical groups use specific gender norms in connection with perceived religious/sectarian or ethnic identities to morally justify and organise violence, and to recruit new fighters. In such wars, armed groups resort to violence towards particular identity groups in a strategic and systematic way.[39] In order to justify their use of violence, they sometimes use theological and ideological doctrinal beliefs that tell them who to target and how to target.[40]

As seen in Bosnia and Rwanda, during conflict hegemonic masculinity intersects with constructions of communal identity, whether defined in ethnic, religious or sectarian terms.[41] Binary constructions of identity create distinctions between 'their/our women' and 'their/our men'. As Alison writes: "'Our women' are chaste, honourable, and to be protected by 'our men'; 'their women' are unchaste and depraved. Wartime propaganda presents the (male) enemy as those who would rape and murder 'our' women and the war effort is directed at saving 'our' women."[42] Perpetrating sexual violence against 'their women' appears more acceptable, even 'necessary'. It appears necessary because it ticks two boxes – by perpetrating sexual violence, men prove their loyalty to their nation and to their heterosexuality.[43]

A significant component of the violent treatment of women, especially women of the other community or the enemy, is related to the 'value' given to them or to their bodies. Sexual objectification theory offers a useful framework for understanding the treatment of women during conflict, including ISIS's sexual violence against Yezidi women. Sexual objectification is the treatment of women as things rather people, commodifying their bodies and depriving them from controlling their own bodies and decisions that will affect their lives.[44] In feminist discussions, this has often been studied in relation to pornography, excessive preoccupations with women's appearance or obsessions with beauty.[45] But this idea has resonance in explaining sexual violence in conflict as well. In her explanation of the social construction of femininity and how it oppresses women, Bartky describes sexual objectification as the separation of a woman's "sexual parts or functions" from her person and the reduction of women's sexuality into an instrument.[46] Instrumentalisation of the female body is only one aspect of sexual objectification. It also entails denial of autonomy, interchangeability with other objects (such as money and other resources), claims of ownership of women's bodies, denying value to feelings and needs, silencing and control

over physical appearance.[47] All these features of sexual objectification resonate with ISIS's management of women's bodies in general and Yezidi women's bodies in particular.

Yezidis and the states

Throughout its history, Iraq has been home to several ethnic and religious minorities, including Kurds, Turkmens, Christians (Assyrians, Chaldeans, Mandean Sabean and other denominations), Jews, Yezidis, Baha'i, Kaka'i, and Shabak and many other smaller ethnoreligious minorities.[48] Shabak and Ka'kai communities as well as Shi'a Turkmens and Christians have been targeted by ISIS, including being exposed to sexual violence.[49] Persecution and exposure to violence or discrimination is not a new phenomenon for Iraq's ethnic and religious minorities. The lawlessness and insecurity created by violence in Iraq after 2003 exacerbated existing discriminative attitudes towards the Yezidis and other minority communities.[50]

The history of the relationship between the Yezidis and their local and imperial rulers in the past, and with various Iraqi regimes in the twentieth century, provides an illuminating context for ISIS's persecution and violence. The Yezidi community has remained at the 'periphery of the periphery' of the states in which they lived, both socially and geographically, and religious prejudices have played an important role in their stigmatisation as a community and their marginalisation.[51] The massacres and enslavement Yezidis experienced at the hands of ISIS had precedents. The justifications for the historical attacks and historical perceptions of the Yezidis as a 'deviant' community are similar to those of ISIS. The Yezidi guiding angel, Melek Taus (the Peacock Angel), which comes from Zoroastrianism and symbolises the sun (which Yezidis see as the source of life), led the Yezidis to be incorrectly labelled as 'devil-worshippers'.[52] Yezidis maintain a vivid memory of persecutions throughout their history and passed these memories orally from generation to generation. The accounts of the Yezidis who experienced ISIS's attacks show that there is widely held perception among the community which associates the experiences of sexual and other forms of violence with the long-term political and socio-economic disadvantages of being an ethno-religious minority in Iraq and historical prejudices.[53] The contemporary Yezidi vernacular labels the persecution and violence they experienced at the hands of local

rulers and imperial authorities as *firmans*[54] and they consider ISIS's atrocities are as the (74th) *firman*.

One of the earliest persecutions in the Yezidi memory is the execution of al-Hasan Adi, the grand-nephew of Sheikh Adi, and his two hundred supporters by the governor of Mosul in 1254. Another example is in 1415 when a Shafi theologian accused Yezidis of neglect and violation of Islamic laws and, with the military support of the Kurds (Sindi tribe), burned Yezidi's most sacred shrine, Lalish.[55] Yezidis also faced persecutions and violence by Ottoman pashas and local rulers loyal to the Empire. The famous Ottoman traveller Evliya Çelebi describes an expedition by the ruler of Diyarbakir in 1640 that resulted in massacres and enslavement of thousands of Yezidis.[56]

In the nineteenth century, the Yezidis were exposed to large scale attacks and violence justified on religious grounds.[57] These religious justifications were shaped by the politics of the time. The Ottomans were undertaking significant reforms (*Tanzimat* reforms that started in 1839) that entailed centralisation, forced conscription, strengthening administrative rule and improving the tax collection system, and provision of guarantees and protection for the non-Muslim *millets* – Greeks, Armenians, Jews and other Christian minorities. However, Ottomans did not give the Yezidis *millet* status and continued to keep them outside the religious order. The Yezidis resisted centralisation policies and demanded exemption from forced conscription due their distinct religion. The campaigns that massacred thousands of Yezidis in the first half of the nineteenth century by the Kurdish Emirs Bedirkhan Beg (1832 and 1844) and Muhammad Pasha of Rawanduz (1832) are still widely remembered by Yezidi community members.[58] Eventually, Yezidis were relieved from military duty in return for a payment in 1849, but attempts at forced conversion of Yezidi leaders continued.[59] There are also records of Yezidi tribal chiefs being appointed as local Ottoman rulers and of Yezidi tribal alliances with some Sunni tribal chiefs against others, implying that the history of Yezidi-state relations were more complex than the retrospective reading of minority-majority relations.

In the second half of the nineteenth century Ottoman centralisation policies were further reinforced, which led to the weakening and collapse of local principalities and tribal leaders. The chaos created by this transformation created space filled by the authority of religious leaders and sheikhs, especially in the eastern Ottoman territories. Missionary

activities in these areas also intensified. In his attempt to control the area, Sultan Abdulhamid created the *Hamidiye* Cavalry, who are remembered as "enforcers of a militant Sunnism" by non-Muslim communities.[60] In this process, the Ottomans attempted to conscript Yezidis and Islamise them, which led to some of the Ottoman Pashas terrorising Yezidis communities. In one of these attacks, an Ottoman pasha took over Yezidi temples and forced the community to convert to Islam, kidnapping Yezidi women and girls and/or forcing them to marry Ottoman soldiers.[61] Eventually the Ottomans returned their temples and sacred possessions back to the Yezidi and dismissed the pasha.[62]

After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the British Mandate (1918-1932) in Iraq sought to maintain existing tribal and social hierarchies and the status quo as much as possible to discourage rebellion. This was a key period in institutionalising identity and gender hierarchies at the foundation of the new Iraqi state. In doing this, the British introduced a version of the Ottoman *millet* system to regulate relations between certain religious communities and the state. The Islamic provisions concerning non-Muslim communities were reframed to shape the concept of a religious minority in legal terms in Iraqi legislation. The 1925 Constitution divided citizens based on religion, sect and location – Muslim, Christian, Jewish; Shi'a and Sunni sect identity; and urban and rural location, which served to reinforce tribal structures.[63] This allowed the *ahl-i kitab* (defined as people of the book – the Qur'an, Bible and Torah) to be able to have some degree of religious autonomy, as under Ottoman rule. Yezidi were not recognised as a minority but they were allowed to practice their religion.[64] This compartmentalised administration system increased mistrust between religious and ethnic minorities and nationalist government circles in Baghdad, feeding into and further reinforcing tensions between communities with long-term implications.

Throughout the history of the Iraqi state, Yezidi community leaders allied themselves with either the Baghdad government or the Kurds when trying to deal with tensions or protect their community's position. But this meant that Yezidis were caught between the conflictual relationship between the Kurds and the Arab state.[65] As part of its Arabisation campaigns in the 1970s, the Ba'ath regime forced Yezidi children to attend only Arabic speaking schools, introduced compulsory military conscription and forcefully relocated Yezidis in Sinjar, whom it classified as 'Arabs' of the mountain villages in Sinjar, to collective towns and villages built near Arab villages.[66] The relationship between Kurds and Yezidis is not without

problems either. Yezidis speak Kurmanji Kurdish, but the majority of the Yezidis believe they have a distinct religious identity as well as a distinct ethnic identity. However, the Kurdish nationalist rhetoric considers Yezidis as ancient Kurds and Kurdish political actors have put pressure on the Yezidis to identify as Kurds. Many Yezidis have actually done so and have joined the Kurdish peshmerga and fought against the Iraqi regime in the past.[67] The Yezidi-Kurdish tension also exists due to Sinjari Yezidis fighting in the Arab army against the Kurds during the *Anfal* Campaigns, the regime's genocidal operations against the Kurds in 1987-1991, which killed thousands of Kurds, displaced them in massive numbers and destroyed several villages and towns.[68] However, Yezidis were also a target population in *Anfal* operations and many Yezidis were forcefully conscripted to the Iraqi army.[69]

The 1990-91 Gulf War and its aftermath affected Yezidi-state relations in significant ways. The atrocities committed against the Kurds by the Iraqi regime during and after the war led to the creation of an internationally protected safe zone to the north of the 36th parallel. This zone later transformed into a de facto autonomous Kurdish region, which divided the Yezidi-inhabited areas between Arab and Kurdish control. Part of Sheikhan in the northeast of Mosul, including Lalish temple, fell under Kurdish authority. Southern Sheikhan and the Sinjar Mountain area, which is close to the border with Syria, remained under Iraqi authority.[70] However, the Kurds maintained their argument that Sinjar belongs to the Kurds. Many Yezidis in collective towns and villages moved into the city of Duhok and the integration of the Sheikhani Yezidis into Kurdish society deepened. The move of many Yezidis from collective villages into the city of Duhok was welcomed by the Kurdistan Regional Government as it defined the Yezidis as 'the original Kurds'.[71] This argument, they believed, bolstered the Kurdish claim to Sinjar. Many Yezidis joined in the aspirations for Kurdish self-determination. On the other hand, the divisions between Sinjari Yezidis and those living under Kurdish control deepened due to their habitation in different socio-economic and political contexts, adding an extra layer of fragmentation to existing tribal and rural/urban divisions. Yezidis living in the Kurdistan Region had access to jobs created by the presence of international organisations and the relative safety in the region compared to the rest of Iraq. However, despite the allocation of 11 seats in the Kurdish Parliament for Assyrians, Chaldeans, Turkomans and Armenians, Yezidis were not allocated one. In Baghdad, Yezidis get one seat in the Parliament, but as part of the Kurdish bloc, rather than as a distinct minority.[72]

Since the invasion in 2003, Iraq's religious minorities and women have become direct targets and have experienced specific challenges in the sectarian conflict and extremist violence. After the invasion, the Kurdish region became de jure autonomous, but the status of the territories contested between the Kurds and Baghdad remained unresolved. Disputed territories, a wide territorial belt stretching from the Iranian border to the Syrian border around the Kurdish region parts of Nineveh, Kirkuk, Salahaddin and Diyala. Sinjar is in these territories. The minorities in these territories have been particularly vulnerable as they are easily overlooked due to their lack of strong political advocacy and representation. This is why Yezidis have tried ally themselves with the Baghdad or Erbil governments, which only served to reinforce their position of being stuck between two authorities.[73] In political market terms, minorities in disputed territories have junior status as clients with little power and they had to trade their political allegiances at a discount. This made them more vulnerable to abuses and deprived them of proper protection. Moreover, the uncertainty over the status of these territories and competition over their control led to their neglect in infrastructural, educational and economic terms, which exacerbated the precarious position of minorities located in disputed territories.

During the post-2003 sectarian conflict in Iraq, members of religious and other minorities were viciously targeted. Nearly 60 percent of the ethnic and religious minorities and 80 percent of Christians were internally and externally displaced and their numbers in Iraq decreased significantly.[74] Targeted killings of Yezidis started as early as 2004 in the Mosul area and many Yezidis began to leave Mosul.[75] Imams in Mosul reportedly were making statements in Friday sermons that it was the duty of good Muslims to kill all Yezidis in Iraq if they refused to convert to Islam.[76] Suicide bombings in 2007 in towns inhabited by Yezidis killed several hundreds of people. Even before ISIS's attacks, life for Yezidis had become increasingly dangerous and effective government mechanisms to protect minorities from targeted violence were lacking.[77]

After the 2007 bombings, the KDP *peshmerga* took responsibility for protecting the Sinjar district, which led to the *de facto* inclusion of Sinjar into the Kurdish zone. It has been argued that the underlying goal in taking over the security of the area was to discourage Yezidis from moving into Duhok.[78] When ISIS attacked Sinjar in the August of 2014, the KDP Peshmerga in control of the area suddenly withdrew and there were no Iraqi forces present either. The abandonment of Yezidis by the Kurdish forces was a major

disappointment for the Yezidis and put a huge strain on Kurdish-Yezidi relations. Yezidis and several Kurdish factions severely criticised the withdrawal. Certain contextual factors have been highlighted such as lack of military support for the Kurdish peshmerga on the ground, lack of preparedness, issues with coordination, and obstacles related to bureaucratic, partisan and budgetary issues.[79] On the other hand, the forces of the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party), a Kurdish military and political organisation, and its affiliate YPG (People's Protection Units) in Syria, helped Yezidis during ISIS's attack by opening up a humanitarian corridor between Sinjar and the Syrian border, and YPG forces rescued many Yezidi women and children from ISIS captivity in Syria. After the attacks, the KRG authorities provided refuge for thousands of Yezidis and undertook initiatives to rescue kidnapped Yezidis.

In short, ISIS's attacks against the Yezidis took place within a long-historical context that shaped perceptions about Yezidis as a community and acceptable and non-acceptable ways of treating this community and minorities in general. They were considered outside the religious order during the Ottoman period and similarly they were not given minority status under the British Mandate nor in Iraq's history. As the 20th century British administrator Edmonds stated "[Yezidis] tended to be regarded … as apostates and were thus exposed to the danger that persons in authority, high and low … might think it is not only legitimate but even *meritorious to maltreat them*."[80] In the more recent historical context, Yezidis have been situated in multiple layers of disadvantages created by Iraqi and Kurdish politics on the ground and the lack of protection this created. ISIS's attack against the Yezidis and its treatment of this community should be understood in the light of these historical and complex hierarchies of political privileges and identity-based politics.

Sexual violence at the intersection of gender and identity hierarchies in Iraq

The intersection of ethno-sectarian hierarchy and gender hierarchy has been institutionalised throughout Iraq's history. The British Mandate's decision to maintain existing social hierarchies based on supposed religious and customary rules led to the maintenance and institutionalisation of patriarchal and patrimonial gender hierarchies. Based on these divisions, women's legal rights fell under different family laws based on supposed customary and religious rules. Their issues were dealt by religious courts in urban areas and by tribal courts in rural areas, leading to the 'tribalisation of women' under British

rule.[81] Under the Hashemite Monarchy (1932-1958), political and social activism critical of the system increased and this included discussions on women's issues. Different versions of women's rights began to emerge, one based on the principles of equality and justice and the other based on the principles of national progress and women's roles in this.[82] Under General Qasim's new Iraqi Republic (1958-1963), huge progress was made regarding women's rights. The progress made in the development the welfare state, land reform and the creation of a more unified and civic law led to the weakening of tribal, religious and sectarian affiliations, which improved women's positions. The 1959 Personal Status Code offered a more unified and egalitarian family law; but still women were legally considered as inferior to men, despite the provision of gender equality in the constitution.[83]

The Ba'ath regime (1968-2003), initially pushed for female empowerment, such as encouraging and creating opportunities for women's education and employment, under the premises of an Arab nation-building effort. However, the 1969 Penal Law authorised domestic violence as 'domesticating the wife' and positioned men as the head of the family.[84] Moreover, after 1980s, in the context of the Iran-Iraq War in 1980-88, the Gulf War in 1990-91 and the sanctions that followed it, the regime increasingly reinforced militant and hegemonic masculinity and a patrimonial nationalism. It enforced conservative and traditional gender norms intersecting with religious and sectarian hierarchies. The intersection of gender and identity hierarchies had begun to manifest itself in increasingly violent forms, especially for women caught in such intersections. Gendered violence became a core component of the discriminative, exclusionary and unfair practices.

This gendered and identity-based violence took place at the backdrop of increased discrimination and violence against women, and valorisation of militant and hegemonic masculinity in general. For instance, early marriage was encouraged, polygamy was revived and honour killing was briefly legalised.[85] The regime provided financial rewards to families who gave birth to a fourth child and defined the 'good' Iraqi women as the mother of future soldiers.[86] This reinforced the idea that women's main role is reproduction and objectified their bodies as tools for this. The Ba'ath regime used sexual violence against women and men who opposed the regime.[87] Abduction, rape, harassment and other forms of crimes against women also became widespread after 1991. The deterioration of security, the large-scale destruction caused by coalition bombings, the impact sanctions and the violent suppression of

the Shi'a uprising in 1991 created a trauma across the society, hardened divisions and 'normalised' violent acts.[88]

The repertoire of norms and practices of tribal and Islamic conservatism provided the source of 'legitimacy' for such acts, which treated women's bodies as 'things' that should be controlled and managed. The regime's 'Faith Campaign' made the punishment for 'honour killing' lighter, banned women from travelling abroad without a male relative and prostitution became punishable by death.[89] Saddam Hussein's son, Uday and his militia, *Feda'iyye Saddam*, kidnapped and raped young Iraqi women and girls for sexual gratification, killed alleged sex workers and beheaded women using swords in front of their homes without any judicial process in Baghdad and Mosul.[90] Making allowances for domestic violence and women's murder, not properly punishing perpetrators, treating victims as criminals and sexual maltreatment of women in prisons exacerbated and deepened the informal and formal institutionalisation of sexual violence against women.[91]

Women with specific identity affiliations experienced specific gendered violences, justified by attributing lesser value to the lives and bodies of those women. For instance, the state offered cash rewards for divorcing Iranian wives and sexual violence against Kurdish women was notorious during the *Anfal* Campaigns and rape was seen as part of an ethnic cleansing strategy.[92] The system that emerged in Iraq after the US invasion in 2003 further reinforced the acceptability of sexual and gender-based violence and the objectification of women. This was done by militias and gangs as well as the Iraqi police and occupation forces – the infamous US-run Abu Ghraib facility is a case in point. According to an Oxfam survey, by 2009, 55 percent of Iraqi women experienced violence after 2003.[93] Sexual and gender-based violence in its many forms including harassment, human trafficking, forced prostitution, temporary (pleasure) marriages, rape, kidnapping and femicide became rampant, especially during the sectarian war.[94] Women in rural areas and with poorer socio-economic backgrounds, especially those that were displaced due to conflict, were even more severely affected. The increased insecurity and religious extremism made Yezidi women (as well as Shi'a, Shi'a Turkmen, Christian, Shabak and Kaka'i women) direct targets.[95]

It would be simplistic to attribute ISIS's gender policy to its interpretation of *shari'a*. Ideas of hegemonic and militant masculinity embedded in the state governance mentality in Iraq can be observed in ISIS's gender policy. The manifesto of the *Al-Khansaa* Brigade states

that men are superior to women because that is how it has always been and that is the nature of things: “this is how humanity has operated for a long time and this is how it always was, even in ‘liberal’ states and for today’s ‘free’ societies”.[96] The *Al-Khansaa* Brigade was a moral police and religious enforcement unit responsible for arresting and punishing women in a gender-segregated way. For instance, they would arrest women for not walking with a male escort, not having the right attire or for wearing heels. This is similar to the Islamist militias’ harassment of women for wearing western clothes or for not wearing the hijab during the sectarian violence.[97]

Rules of patrilineal lineage, present in Iraq since the Ottoman period, were also re-used ISIS. According to these rules, only fathers can pass their religious identity to their children. As a result, the children of women raped by ISIS automatically became Sunni Muslim ISIS ‘citizens’. This was ‘ethnic cleansing’ in the sense that, as happened in the context of the ethnic conflict in the Balkans, women’s bodies were merely seen as incubators for male genes.[98] Yezidis, traditionally, pass their identity to the next generation genealogically and both parents have to be Yezidi. Therefore, ISIS’s sexual violence against Yezidi women was an ‘impactful’ method to threaten the Yezidi identity.

ISIS’s conceptualisation of the Yezidi identity again reflected continuities with historical and contemporary accounts and perceptions about the Yezidi community. Historical prejudices towards the Yezidi community, for instance the labels of ‘devil-worshippers’ or ‘pagan’, provided justificatory material for ISIS. Islamic manuscripts from as early as the sixteenth century that condemned the Yezidis, provided a background for such misperceptions.[99] Western orientalist accounts of the Yezidis also described them as an exotic, closed, strange pagan community, similar to the early writings of Evliya Çelebi and Sherefhan Bitlisi’s accounts of the Yezidis.[100] Similarly, ISIS described the Yezidis as pagans and as non-believers (*mushrik*) “so deviant from the truth that even cross-worshipping Christians for ages considered them devil worshippers and Satanists”.[101] ISIS argued that the existence of such a community today should be questioned and their deviation obliges ISIS to eliminate them, otherwise “they will be asked about it on Judgment Day”.[102] ISIS also built on the Ottoman and British colonial administration system of compartmentalising the society based on religious identity, which created different obligations and legal status to different religious communities. In ISIS’s classification, Yezidis were not defined as *ahl-i kitab* or a non-Muslim *millet* and could not be put in the same category as Christians or Jews.

The historical (old and more recent) antecedents for practices and norms that objectified women and considered them inferior beings compared to men provided a repertoire for ISIS's violence. For instance, temporary marriages (or pleasure marriages called *mut'a*), which were widely practiced by ISIS (a captive woman could be married numerous times in a matter of hours) served to "incarcerate, veil, and seclude women whom they treat as mere *commodities*", were actually present since the early years of the Iraqi state.[103]

Sexual Objectification of Yezidi women

Sexual objectification theory offers a useful framework for understanding a key component of ISIS's sexual violence against women – the treatment of women as 'things' rather than people, commodifying their bodies and depriving them from controlling their own bodies and decisions that will affect their lives. Their sexuality was reduced to a tool and was separated from their person. Their personal autonomy was denied, and their bodies became goods or profit (*khum* in ISIS's terminology) and tools for sexual gratification that could be exchanged for money and other things. Their feelings and trauma due to their treatment was denied in this transactional treatment and their lives were entirely under the control of their 'owners'. All of these features of sexual objectification resonate with ISIS's management of women's bodies in general and Yezidi women's bodies in particular. The sale of women and girls, human trafficking and hostage ransoms became a major revenue source for ISIS. Such an objectification and dehumanisation deprived Yezidi women and girls of their basic human right to have control over their bodies and, through this, it exposed them to extreme sexual, physical and emotional exploitation.

The regulation of sexual relationships as sexual property in general is central to the regulation of economic relationships through reproduction, access to sex (in terms of permission for marriage, regulation of prostitution and inheritance by public authorities, states, tribes or armed groups. Hegemonic masculinity – norms and institutions that seek to maintain men's authority over women and over subordinate masculinities and present men as the implementers of violence and protectors, decision-makers and women as the victims or innocents – is key to these processes.[104] Hegemonic masculinity attributes a material value to

women's bodies, treating them as capital, and commodifies access and control over their bodies, and sanctions sexual violence. In conflict, women's sexuality becomes a "commodity to be exploited and exchanged by violence-yielding men".[105] Soldiers and militias often consider sex as a type of payment, through which female sexuality turns into a resource.[106] For instance, the Sudan People's Liberation Army gave licence to its recruits to rape and abduct as part of the pillage as compensation for participating in fighting. Transactional arrangements over women's bodies is not only a war phenomenon. The practice of bride price in South Sudan, through which women are exchanged for money or other forms of wealth through marriage, treats women as property.[107]

Sexual violence plays a central role in the creation and functioning of a specific political marketplace of conflict and war. From a Bordieuan perspective, sexuality becomes a form of capital that can be converted to other forms of power and types of transactions within a political marketplace. ISIS used different types and degrees of gender violence depending on which community it targeted and ruled. Its gendered and religiously defined moral ideas intersected and led to specific actions, and mobilisation and administration tactics. The promise of sexual access to women and girls was one of ISIS's recruitment strategies and propaganda materials.[108] ISIS's ideological propaganda documents not only justify violence but also normalise and institutionalise it. They do so in the context of identity-based claims that intersect with allowances for sexual objectification of women from specific minority communities. Sexual violence became a measure of masculinity and victory, a tool for subjugation and violence against the other non-Muslim and non-Sunni minorities. Women's bodies become the "vehicle of communication, the site of battle and the conquered territory … a communication … between hegemonic and subordinate masculinities", which "fundamentally objectifies" their bodies.[109] This served ISIS to assert its supremacy over other groups and maintain hierarchy. The objectification and commodification of Yezidi women and girls' bodies, and their treatment as 'slaves', served to 'humiliate' a defeated community and maintain hierarchies between Muslims, non-Sunnis, non-Muslims, and non-believers.[110] For instance, a female ISIS member writing in *Dabiq* expressed her gratitude for the "day the first slave-girl entered" their home, to see the "humiliation of those who denied god".

Underlying the sexual objectification of Yezidi women is ISIS's hegemonic masculinity that affects all women, including Muslim women. ISIS considered women to

have a lower social status than men and saw women as having power and authority over women. In that sense, a clear continuum exists between how ISIS subjected Muslim women to men's authority and its treatment of Yezidi women. The difference with regards to Yezidi women and girls was that they were exposed to violence and subjugation at an extreme level, being at the lowest layer of the 'hierarchy of women' with Muslim women who were ISIS members at the top. ISIS justified violence against *all* women in the name of 'correcting' or 'punishing' them if they neglected their responsibilities or violated the rules. Women were required to remain in seclusion, be fully veiled when outside, and were not allowed to leave their house without a male chaperone unless it was absolutely essential, such as studying theology or being a doctor or teacher for women. The penalty for the violations of rules included corporal and capital punishments, including being stoned to death for committing adultery.[111] Muslim women were expected to educate themselves in Sharia so that they could raise their children as pious Muslims. Their status in society was determined through marriage (ideally as young as possible).[112]

The *Al-Khanssaa* manifesto outlines what 'God ordained for women' and justified hegemonic masculinity. The Manifesto blamed the western life and feminism for corrupting women, for forcing them to take up roles outside the house and for emasculating and weakening men. Since could not fulfil their role to provide for women, women had to move away from their 'actual' and 'true' role: "Women are not presented with a true picture of man … if men were men, then women would be women".[113] ISIS's ideology presents the life under *Khilafah* as a liberation for women and empowerment through ideals of feminine purity.[114] For women, "there was no responsibility greater than that of being a wife to her husband" and "while Islam gives man dominance, it bestows upon women the honour of implementation (executive) … a commander who oversees and is capable, and others under his leadership who obey him and carry out his requests" and raising children that would fight for the 'right' cause is seen as the highest grace.[115]

Conclusion

This article explains how ISIS used specific gender norms and sexual objectification in connection with perceived religious/sectarian identities in order to morally justify and

organise violence. ISIS reinforced gender norms that perpetuated patriarchy and men's control over women to organise the lives and behaviours of its recruits and the people under its control. It justified violence against women and girls and their commodification in a male-dominated social, political and economic system. This showed again that gender is a key component of the politics of violence rather than simply a by-product of conflict.

Male domination and the 'protection' of women, or sexual stratification, combined with ethnic, religious and political hierarchies is a typically common component of nation-building efforts.[116] Violent practices and the institutionalisation of gendered violence under the Ba'ath regime and in post-2003 Iraq, as well as the gendered and hierarchical governance that informed the political and institutional culture and norms in Iraq since Ottoman rule, provided the context for ISIS's methods and ideology. This informed the types of violence ISIS used against the Yezidis and the sexual commodification and objectification of women. In that sense, ISIS's methods were extreme but not exceptional or unexpected.[117]

ISIS's attacks against the Yezidis appear as an extreme form of already ongoing discrimination, neglect and lack of legal and practical protection for minorities. In the case of Yazidi women, their precarious vulnerable position as members of Yezidi community was exacerbated by their gender identity, resulting from the intersection of a religious minority identity with a gender identity to generate higher degree of vulnerabilities. Yezidis' position in Iraq as a religious minority located in disputed territories, and being stuck between with Arab and Kurdish authorities, created significant disadvantages. Although not followed by all Yezidis, the traditional gender norms within the Yezidi community, such as the embodiment of a family's and wider society's 'honour' in women's bodies, made ISIS's sexual violence particularly destructive for the community.

This article situated ISIS's doctrine justifying its treatment of the Yezidi community, and Yezidi women in particular, within wider majority-minority relations in Iraq and inequalities embedded in the 'twilight' institutions of a failed state. ISIS's institutions and its specific norms and practices were chosen (over others) from an historically present spectrum of social institutions. These were adjusted or changed to reflect the sociology of the organisation and its political and economic goals. Their norms made clear distinctions based on gender and religious identity, elevating men over women in general, and Sunni Muslim

identity over others, non-Muslim women in particular. These provided the context for the sexual objectification and commodification of Yezidi women and girls.

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[1] Cetorelli et al., ‘Mortality and kidnapping’.
[2] There is a push for the treatment of the Yazidi community at the hands of ISIS to be officially recognised as genocide and several experts have already defined the atrocities as genocide (Moradi and Anderson, ‘The Islamic State's Êzîdî genocide’). So far official international recognition of ISIS’ attacks against the Yazidis as genocide has not come through. However, in 2016, the UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner and the US House of Representatives defined this premeditated campaign of violence as genocide that involved mass executions, abductions, forced conversions and sexual violence.
[3] Jefferson, ‘In War as in Peace’; Sitkin et al., ‘To Destroy a People’.
[4] Davies and True, ‘Reframing Conflict-Related’, 505.
[5] *Dabiq* 2014, Issue 4, pp. 14-15.
[6] *Ibid.* p. 15.
[7] Interviews with members of Yezidi community, May 2018, Duhok.
[8] Author’s interview with Prince Hassan, May 2018, Prince’s House in Sheikhan.
[9] Van Zoonen and Wirya, ‘The Yazidis’.
[10] Al-Ali, ‘Sexual Violence in Iraq’.
[11] True, *The Political Economy of Violence.*
[12] Ahram, ‘Sexual Violence’.
[13] Al-Ali, ‘Sexual Violence in Iraq’, 11.
[14] Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*; Anderson, *Imagined Communities.*
[15] Abu-Lughod, *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?*, 136.
[16] Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases*; Sjoberg, *Gendering Global Conflict*; Carpenter, ‘Recognizing Gender-Based Violence’.
[17] Cohen, *Rape during Civil War*; Farr, ‘Extreme War Rape’.
[18] Davies and True, ‘Reframing Conflict-Related’.
[19] Henry, ‘The Fixation on Wartime Rape’; Kelly, ‘The Everyday/Everynightness of Rape’; Cockburn ‘The Continuum of Violence’.
[20] Al-Ali, ‘Sexual Violence in Iraq’; Ahram ‘Sexual Violence’.
[21] Al-Ali, ‘Sexual Violence in Iraq’, 23.
[22] Efrati, *Women in Iraq*; Al-Ali, ‘Sexual Violence in Iraq’, 14; Ahram, ‘Sexual Violence’.
[23] De Waal, ‘Mission without End?’; Duffield, *Global Governance*.
[24] Hoffmann, ‘Myths Set in Motion’, 161.
[25] Chinkin and Kaldor, ‘Gender and New Wars’, 167
[26] Humphreys and Weinstein, ‘Handling and Manhandling Civilians’.
[27] Mazurana and Carlson, ‘From Combat to Community’, 4.
[28] Hudson and Matfess, ‘In Plain Sight’, 24, 27.
[29] Sjoberg and Peet, ‘A(nother) Dark Side’.
[30] Tickner, ‘Feminist Responses’.
[31] Sjoberg and Peet, ‘A(nother) Dark Side’.
[32] Davies and True, ‘Reframing Conflict-Related’; Kelly, ‘The Everyday/Everynightness of Rape’; Cockburn ‘The Continuum of Violence’.
[33] Carpenter, ‘Recognizing Gender-Based Violence’.
[34] Lund, ‘Twilight Institutions’; Bourdieu, ‘The Forms of Capital’.
[35] Price, ‘Finding the Man in the Soldier-Rapist’.
[36] Carpenter, ‘Recognizing Gender-Based Violence’, Alison, ‘Wartime Sexual Violence’.
[37] Alison, ‘Wartime Sexual Violence’, 78
[38] *Ibid*., 79
[39] Davies and True, ‘Reframing Conflict-Related’, 505.
[40] Rapoport ‘Fear and Trembling’.
[41] Alison, ‘Wartime Sexual Violence’, 75.
[42] *Ibid*., 80.
[43] Price, ‘Finding the Man in the Soldier-Rapist’.
[44] Szymanski et al. ‘Sexual Objectification of Women’, 6.
[45] Bordo, *Unbearable Weight*; Malik, ‘Women’s Objectification’; Bartky, *Femininity and Domination*.
[46] Bartky, *Femininity and Domination*, 35.
[47] Nussbaum’ Objectification’.
[48] Kurds constitute the largest ethnic minority Iraq (15-20% of the Iraqi population) followed by Turkmen (around 2.5 million). Turkmens, mostly residing in northern areas of Iraq, especially in Kirkuk, Wassit and southeast of Baghdad, are a multi-religious community with Shi’a, Sunni and Christian denominations. The largest religious minority in Iraq are the Christians. Estimated to be 1.4 million before the 1990s, today the number of Christians in Iraq is around 300,000 and they are mostly located in Baghdad, Mosul, the Nineveh plain, Kirkuk, Basra and the Kurdistan Region. Oehring, ‘Christians and Yazidis in Iraq’, 14. The Yezidis constitute the second largest religious minority in Iraq and are estimated to have around half a million members in northern Iraq and northern Syria. Yezidis are also located in western Iran, Turkey, Armenia and Germany. The Shabak community (population of less than 500,000) is another minority group with a distinct culture and language with a mixture of Shi’a and Sunni Muslim affiliations, located Nineveh plains near Mosul, and like the Yezidis,

they have been also targeted by ISIS. The Ka'kai (or Ahl-e Haqq, about 75,000 left in Iraq) is another religious minority with a distinct religion including elements of Shi'a Islam and Zoroastrianism, located in the Nineveh plains (as well as in Diyala, Erbil and Sulaimaniyah) that was persecuted by ISIS. Minority Rights Group International, 'Crossroads', 9-10.

[49] Bor, 'Response to and Reparations for'

[50] Maisel, 'Social Change amidst Terror'; Oehring, 'Christians and Yazidis in Iraq'.

[51] Fuccaro, *The Other Kurds.*

[52] Allison, 'The Yazidis', 1. The Yezidi religion is distinct from other religions in the region and is considered to be one of the oldest practised religions in the world today. Yezidism is primarily a set of beliefs and practices transmitted orally across generations and has been an anti-orthodox religion. Attempt to define Yezidism based on textual sources (an attempt undertaken by Western and Muslim travellers and scholars) remain limited in capturing its oral traditions, Kreyenbroek, *Yazidism*.

[53] Author interviews with members of the Yezidi community conducted in 2017 and 2018. These interviews are the basis of another paper the author is writing on Yezidi's engagement with the international community.

[54] The name given to decrees and military campaign orders by the Ottoman sultans.

[55] Allison, 'The Yazidis', 2. Many Yazidi shrines are scattered around Sinjar, Bashika and Sheikhan, and Yezidis' religious rituals are closely connected to these shrines.

[56] Çelebi, *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi*, 50-54.

[57] Gölbaşı, 'Turning the "Heretics"'.

[58] Author interviews, May-June 2018, Kurdistan-Iraq

[59] Allison, 'The Yazidis', 4.

[60] *Ibid*., 4.

[61] Parry, *Six Months in a Syrian Monastery*.

[62] Fuccaro, *The Other Kurds.*

[63] The 1970 Constitution also established Islam as the religion of the State and Article 25 guaranteed "freedom of religion, faith and the exercise of religious rites in accordance with the rules of the constitution and laws and in compliance with morals and public order." Similarly, Islam as the official religion of the state in the 2005 Constitution.

[64] Fuccaro, *The Other Kurds*, 134.

[65] *Ibid.*

[66] Savelsberg et al, 'Effectively Urbanized'; Moradi and Anderson, 'The Islamic State's Êzîdî Genocide'.

[67] The Kaka'i and the Shabak communities have also faced pressure to identify as Kurds. Minority Rights Group International, 'Crossroads', 9-10.

[68] Hardi, *Gendered Experiences of Genocide*, 170.

[69] Moradi and Anderson, 'The Islamic State's Êzîdî genocide'.

[70] Allison, 'The Yazidis'.

[71] *Ibid*., 6.

[72] Van Zoonen and Wirya, 'The Yazidis', 12.

[73] *Ibid.*, 11.

[74] Lamani, 'Minorities in Iraq', 5.

[75] UNHCR 2005.

[76] Ibid., 5.

[77] UNPO, 'Iraq: The Situation of Ethnic and Religious Minorities'

[78] Dulz et al., 'Persecuted and Co-Opted'.

[79] Hama, 'What Explains the Abandonment'.

[80] Allison, 'The Yazidis' quotes from Edmonds, p. 5. Emphasis added.

[81] Efrati, *Women in Iraq*. The juridical system introduced by the British was criticised by urban intellectuals, especially by leftists, Ali, *Women and Gender in Iraq*, 51-52, 55.

[82] Ali, *Women and Gender in Iraq*, 59.

[83] *Ibid.*, 62-63.

[84] *Ibid*, 96.

[85] Rohde, *State-Society Relations*, 102-111.

[86] Ali, *Women and Gender in Iraq,* 100

[87] Although cases of women experiencing this is reported more than men's probably due to the greater stigma around the rape of men. Al-Ali, 'Sexual Violence in Iraq', 15.

[88] Al-Ali and Pratt 2009.

[89] Ali, *Women and Gender in Iraq*, 113.

[90] Amnesty International, 132.

[91] Women were more likely to experience sexual abuse in prisons and had to deal with the societal stigma related to that, although men also experienced it. Al-Ali, 'Sexual Violence in Iraq', 18-19.

[92] Hardi, *Gendered Experiences of Genocide*; Ahram, 'Sexual Violence'; Ali, *Women and Gender in Iraq*, 98.

[93] Oxfam International, 'In Her Own Words'.

[94] Al-Ali and Pratt, *What Kind of Liberation?*; UN Iraq, 'Women in Iraq Factsheet'.

[95] Maisel, 'Social Change amidst Terror'.

[96] Al-Khanssa Brigade, 'Women of the Islamic State', 18.

[97] Beaumont, 'Hidden Victims'.

[98] Alison, 'Wartime Sexual Violence', 86.

[99] Allison, 'The Yazidis', 16.

[100] *Ibid*., 16.

[101] *Dabiq*, Issue 4, 14.
[102] *Dabiq*, Issue 4, 14.
[103] Bashkin, 'Representations of Women', 57, 61. Emphasis added.
[104] Tosh, 'Hegemonic Masculinity, 51; Hudson et al., 'The Heart of the Matter'.
[105] Ahram, 'Sexual Violence, Competitive State Building'.
[106] Maedl, 'Rape as Weapon of War', 145.
[107] Luedke, 'The Commodification of Women'.
[108] Milton and Dodwell, 'Jihadi Brides?'.
[109] Alison, 'Wartime Sexual Violence', 81.
[110] Ahram 'Sexual Violence', 187.
[111] *Dabiq*, Issue 9, 36; Revkin, 'Legal Foundations of the Islamic State', 20.
[112] Hoyle et al., 'Becoming Mulan?, 23; Milton and Dodwell, 'Jihadi Brides?'.
[113] Al-Khansaa Brigade, 'Women of the Islamic State', 17.
[114] Ahram 'Sexual Violence', 188; Brown, 'Violence and Gender Politics'.
[115] *Rumiyah*, 'The Women is A Shepherd', 20.
[116] Yuval-Davis, 'Gender and Nation'; Ali, *Women and Gender in Iraq*, 118-19.
[117] Al-Ali, 'Sexual Violence in Iraq'.