Urgent Call for State-Sponsored Rehabilitation System Under Yazidi Survivors' Law

Statement

























1st August, 2024

DUHOK – As we approach the tenth anniversary of the Yazidi genocide, the Coalition for Just Reparations (C4JR) Rehabilitation Working Group emphasises that the comprehensive, statesponsored rehabilitation system envisioned under the Yazidi Survivors' Law (YSL) remains critically important. This system will play a crucial role in fostering the healing of individual survivors, their families, and entire communities affected by the atrocities committed by the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). The General Directorate for Survivors' Affairs has already taken steps to create and implement this rehabilitation program - a vital initiative that C4JR pledges to support.

Recent research led by Dr. Jan Ilhan Kizilhan highlights a troubling increase in suicide rates among Yazidis, underscoring the dire need for robust mental health support and rehabilitation services. The psychological trauma resulting from genocide, sexual enslavement, and displacement continues to devastate survivors' lives, leading to severe mental health issues including PTSD and depression. Dr. Kizilhan's study, published in Frontiers in Psychology – a multidisciplinary journal that publishes advances in psychological research - specifically points to a high prevalence of suicide among Yazidi survivors, indicating an urgent need for enhanced rehabilitation services to address these critical mental health challenges. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10090394/

C4JR's Rehabilitation Working Group has been diligently working on creating a set of human rights indicators to facilitate and evaluate the process of establishing a holistic statesponsored rehabilitation system. It also provided an input to the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture highlighting rehabilitation needs of ISIL committed wartime sexual torture survivors. These efforts are aimed at ensuring that rehabilitation services meet international standards and effectively address the complex needs of the survivors.

On 12 June, 2024, C4JR held an event in Erbil to mark the launch of a new guide for using human rights indicators to monitor the implementation and realisation of the right to rehabilitation for survivors of ISIL crimes in Iraq, as guaranteed under the YSL. This latest report, "Right to Rehabilitation as Reparation for Survivors of Grave Human Rights Violations," was produced by C4JR, the Jiyan Foundation for Human Rights, and the International Centre for Health and Human Rights (ICHHR), and the event provided a much-needed opportunity to discuss this work.

The launch event was designed to bring together diverse actors, including UN Special Rapporteur on Torture Dr. Alice Edwards who provided keynote remarks, to mobilise shared commitment to supporting effective implementation of the YSL. The collaborative efforts and shared insights underscored the commitment to providing rehabilitation for survivors of ISIL crimes.

In light of the increasing mental health crisis among Yazidis, highlighted by Dr. Kizilhan's research, it is imperative that the Iraqi government, civil society organizations and international community work together to put in place a sustainable quality rehabilitation system. Such a system should provide comprehensive mental health care, social support, and economic opportunities to help survivors rebuild their lives.

"Research has shown that the rates of suicidal thoughts and PTSD are high among survivors," says Suzan Mohammed Hassen, a member of C4JR's Rehabilitation Working Group. "This indicates that survivors still need support." Suzan has published research in the International Journal of Social Psychiatry on post-traumatic stress disorder and gender among the Yazidi population after the traumatic events caused by ISIL, which found a statistically significant association between gender with trauma and PTSD.

Signed by members of C4JR's Rehabilitation Working Group:

Center for Victims of Torture (CVT)
Emma Organization
Farida Global
Free Yezidi Foundation
Hope Makers
Iraqi Educator League
Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS)
Jiyan Foundation for Human Rights
Justice Organization for Minority Rights (JOMR)
SEED Foundation
Sustainable Peace Foundation (SPF)
Yazda

Statement is also supported by:

- Prof. Dr. Dr. Jan Ilhan Kizilhan, Director of Institute for Transcultural Health Science
- Prof. Nimisha Patel, Director of International Centre for Health and Human Rights
- Suzan Mohammed Hassen, Masters in Clinical Psychology with several years of experience and research with Yazidi Survivors
- International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRCT)
- Hawar.Help