

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	1014
Land:	Irak
Kilde:	Human Rights Watch
Titel:	Iraq. Sunni Women Tell of ISIS Detention, Torture - Describe Forced Marriage, Rape
Udgivet:	20. februar 2017
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	21. april 2017

[EN](#) | [DE](#)

- **Source:**
HRW - Human Rights Watch
- **Title:**
Iraq: Sunni Women Tell of ISIS Detention, Torture - Describe Forced Marriage, Rape
- **Publication date:**
20 February 2017
- **ecoi.net summary:** Fighters of Islamic State (IS) group commit acts of violence against Sunni Arab women (arbitrary detention; rape; forced marriage; ill-treatment) [ID 336402]
- **Countries:**
Iraq
- **Original link** <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/02/20/iraq-sunni-women-tell-isis-detention-torture>

Recommended citation:

HRW - Human Rights Watch: Iraq: Sunni Women Tell of ISIS Detention, Torture - Describe Forced Marriage, Rape, 20 February 2017 (available at [ecoi.net](http://www.ecoi.net))
http://www.ecoi.net/local_link/336402/466010_en.html (accessed 12 April 2017)



Iraq: Sunni Women Tell of ISIS Detention, Torture - Describe Forced Marriage, Rape

(Baghdad) – Fighters from the Islamic State (also known as ISIS) are arbitrarily detaining, ill-treating, torturing, and forcibly marrying Sunni Arab women and girls in areas under their control in [Iraq](#), Human Rights Watch said today.

Although accounts of gender-based violence have emerged from areas under ISIS control, these are the first cases against Sunni Arab women in Iraq that Human Rights Watch has been able to document. Researchers interviewed six women in Kirkuk, to which they had escaped from the town of Hawija, 125 kilometers south of Mosul and still under ISIS control. Human Rights Watch and [others](#) have extensively [documented similar abuses by ISIS fighters](#) against Yazidi women.

“Little is known about sexual abuse against Sunni Arab women living under ISIS rule,” said [Lama Fakhri](#), deputy Middle East director at Human Rights Watch. “We hope that the international community and local authorities will do all they can to give this group of victims the support they need.”

In January 2017, Human Rights Watch interviewed four women who said they had been detained by ISIS in 2016, for periods between three days and a month. Another woman said an ISIS fighter, her cousin, forced her to marry him and then raped her. A sixth woman said that ISIS fighters destroyed her home as punishment after her husband escaped ISIS and tried to forcibly marry her. Five of the six women said that ISIS fighters beat them.

One woman said that in April 2016, she tried to escape Hawija with her three children and a large group of other families. ISIS fighters captured the group and held 50 of the women from the group in an abandoned house. The woman said that over the next month, one fighter raped her daily in front of her children. She suspected that many of the other women held with her were also being raped.

Experts from four international organizations, including two medical organizations, working with survivors of sexual assault in northern Iraq told Human Rights Watch it is difficult to assess the prevalence of ISIS’ gender-based violence against women who have fled territory under their control. They said that victims and their families remain silent to avoid stigmatization and harm to the woman or girl’s reputation.

One foreign aid worker said she had seen cases mostly of forced marriage and rape, but she believed that very few of the victims in the displaced communities she works with have come forward. She said some women try to hide the incident from their own families out of fear they will be stigmatized or punished by their relatives or community. Babies born of rape or forced marriage may also face stigma, she said. Their long-term psychosocial support and medical treatment are particular concerns, she said. Another aid provider for an international organization providing services at three camps for people displaced from ISIS-controlled territory

said their staff had documented 50 cases of women and girls who suffered psychological and physical violence at the hands of ISIS and to whom the organization was providing support.

Several local and international organizations are providing support to victims of gender-based violence. However, not enough is being done to tackle the stigma around sexual violence, and there is a lack of awareness about appropriate services and psychosocial or mental health support, medical professionals and service providers in Kirkuk said. Available services continue to be outstripped by needs, they said.

A psychiatrist at an international organization providing psychosocial support in one of the larger displaced people's camps in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq said that too little has been done to inform men about how to support female victims of gender-based violence. She said that very often, male relatives will forbid women from getting counseling and vocational training, even if the women want the services.

The women interviewed are all patients at the Kirkuk Center, where a staff of 12 provides psychological and behavioral counseling to women and children. Dr. Abd al-Karim Kalyfa, who runs the center, said in January that the center was at that time treating 30 patients, 15 of them children, suffering from trauma related to their experiences living under ISIS. In 2016, he said, his center treated about 400 patients who had come from ISIS-held territory. ISIS fighters had raped at least two of his current patients, he said. He knew of one other organization in the Kirkuk area providing services to victims of sexual assault but said there was far too little support available to provide needed mental health care to displaced people who had lived under ISIS.

Another medical professional in Kirkuk who is providing social support to women and children who have been traumatized by their experience under ISIS said that services provided by the federal government focus on pharmacological treatment, not on psychosocial therapy and counseling.

A program manager at an international organization providing services in one of the larger displaced people's camps in northern Iraq said that the group has been able to create effective safe spaces and start vocational projects for women. But it has not yet been able to provide more long-term psychosocial support and other services for survivors of gender-based violence, because it is struggling to find female staff with the needed language skills, experience, and professional qualifications.

The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), together with United Nations agencies and other international humanitarian groups, [have struggled to provide the survivors of violence against Yazidi women](#) who escaped ISIS with post-rape care and psychosocial support.

Providing adequate mental health care and psychosocial support is a complex and long-term challenge. The KRG government, Iraqi central government, UN agencies, and others involved need to put in place a coordinated response, based on an assessment of the needs and the most pressing priorities. The groups should identify key barriers to making care and services accessible, available, and voluntary, and determine the potential cost. Such coordination efforts should include the World Health Organization (WHO) and representatives of the survivors.

[WHO has said that mental health services and psychosocial support](#) are essential components of comprehensive care for survivors of sexual violence. It has also stated that people with mental health conditions and their communities should help develop these services and that those responsible for providing services should strengthen existing resources and make them available in a nondiscriminatory fashion to all.

"ISIS victims of gender-based violence suffer the consequences of their abuse long after they have managed to escape," Fakihi said. "Their care and rehabilitation requires a multifaceted response, with authorities providing the needed medical and psychosocial support and working to stamp out stigma around sexual violence within the wider community."

The Kirkuk-based [National Institute for Human Rights](#) helped Human Rights Watch by identifying the interviewees and setting up and hosting the interviews. All interviews were conducted with full and informed consent, in Arabic without translation. We took measures to respect the privacy of survivors and conducted interviews in as private a setting as possible. In all cases, Human Rights Watch took steps to minimize re-traumatization of survivors, stopping interviews if they caused distress. In order to protect victims and witnesses, individual names and other identifying information have been modified or withheld.

Suad

Suad, 21, is from a village near Hawija. She said that her cousin, who is one year older than her, joined ISIS when its fighters took over the city in 2014. Their families had intended that they marry, but once he became an ISIS fighter, Suad said, she and her parents informed him that they no longer wanted the union to take place. But on a morning in January 2016, he arrived at her home with his brother and cousin and demanded that Suad marry him or he would kill her parents. Her family acquiesced to this threat, and her cousin took her to his home where he forced her to marry him and raped her. She became pregnant. After eight months, Suad said, she

escaped in the middle of the night and fled with her parents to Kirkuk. She gave birth a month later, but the baby boy died four days later, she said.

Fawzia

Fawzia, 45, is from Daquq but was living in Hawija when, in early 2015, ISIS fighters approached her husband and asked him to act as a spy in their neighborhood. He refused and was detained for 10 days beginning on February 7, 2016, in a village outside the city, escaping immediately after he was released. Fawzia said that three ISIS fighters occupied her house for three days during this period, put her two children under house arrest, and forced them to stay in one room. She said that she saw ISIS fighters bring a different girl each day to the adjacent room for about an hour. She said she was able to see the girls when the door to her room was open. She estimated that they were about 16 and said she heard them crying through the wall. She believed the fighters had sexually assaulted the girls.

After the three days, Fawzia said she told the fighters to stop bringing girls to her house. One of them hit her with his hand and the butt of his gun, and said that their leader would come and marry her. They also warned her that if she tried to escape to Kirkuk, ISIS operatives in the city would find and kill her. On the fourth morning, during the 5 a.m. prayer, when all the ISIS fighters were at the local mosque, Fawzia fled with her children to Kirkuk. She broke down into tears as she completed her story:

When I arrived at the first Peshmerga checkpoint, I was so scared that they [ISIS] would find out I had escaped that I didn't register myself. I am so scared here in Kirkuk that I have spent the last year staying inside my relatives' house. I don't even leave to go to the store, and if I must leave, I spend the whole time looking over my shoulder. They might know where I live and come kill me.

Mariam

Mariam, 25, said that in March 2016, her husband fled Hawija, fearing possible execution because he was a former policeman. Three days later, she said, about 20 ISIS fighters found her at home with her daughter and dragged them outside, hitting her head and shoulders. The ISIS fighters blew up her home, forcing her to watch as punishment for her husband's escape. She moved in with her brother-in-law, she said, but within a few days two ISIS fighters arrived and told her she was an apostate because her husband fled, but that she was still young and had to marry one of them. She agreed, telling them to come the following day, and went into hiding that night. Over the next three months, Mariam said, she moved repeatedly. She unsuccessfully tried to escape the area three times but finally fled with her 3-year-old daughter to Kirkuk.

Hanan

Hanan, 26, said she tried to escape from Hawija on April 21, 2016, with her children and about 50 women and four men from several Sunni families. Her husband had fled several weeks earlier. She said ISIS fighters arrested the group in Qayyarah, 65 kilometers north, and took them to an abandoned house, where they locked the women and their children in a room. On the first day, Hanan said, an ISIS guard took her and her daughter, 8, and sons, 6 and 3, to a separate room. ISIS fighters told her she was an apostate because her husband had fled ISIS-controlled territory and that she needed to remarry the local ISIS leader. She said, "Kill me, because I refuse to do that."

The fighters blindfolded her, beat her with plastic cables, and suspended her by her arms for some time – she could not estimate how long – in front of her children. Then they took her down, took off the blindfold, and one of the fighters raped her in front of her children:

The same guy raped me every day for the next month without a blindfold, always in front of my children. My daughter suffers from an intellectual disability so she doesn't really understand what she saw, but my older son brings it up often. I don't know what to do.

She said that the other women were taken out of the communal room, sometimes daily, other times less often, and that one of them, from Hajj Ali who had an 11-month-old daughter, had told her that another fighter was raping her and that he was going to force her to marry him. She suspected that all the other women were being raped as well.

A month after she was captured, Hanan's father was able to locate her and gave ISIS a car and paid US\$500 for her release, she said. He was forced to sign a document stating that if she escaped ISIS-controlled territory, he would be killed. The ISIS fighter who had been raping her said he wanted to marry her, but she and her father refused, she said. In January 2017, she said, she escaped with the rest of her family to Kirkuk. She said she did not know what happened to the other women, but heard from the woman from Hajj Ali's family that she had been forced to marry her rapist.

Karima

Karima, 17, said she fled Hawija toward Kirkuk with 16 family members in June 2016. As they left Hawija, an ISIS sniper shot her mother in the neck, killing her. Most of her family members escaped but ISIS fighters captured Karima and her brothers, ages 6, 11, and 13, and held them in an abandoned home near Hawija

without food and with very little water. They were interrogated about their father, a former Iraqi policeman who was able to flee earlier. Her captors hit her and her 13-year-old brother once each with a gun butt to the shoulder during an interrogation, she said. After three days, they were released and escaped to Kirkuk.

Aisha

Aisha, 25, said she tried to escape Hawija in October 2016 with her family and two other families. While they were waiting for smugglers to show them a safe route, she said, ISIS fighters appeared and opened fire on them, shooting her 6-year-old son in his back. She said that the men in the group escaped, but the ISIS fighters rounded up all five women, hitting Aisha with gun butt on her shoulder. The ISIS fighters took her son to a Hawija hospital and locked up the women in a room in an abandoned house about a 30-minute drive away.

She said that three female ISIS guards came and lashed each woman 65 times with a thin cane, saying that if they even winced, they would get more lashes. Aisha said ISIS held her for 12 days and was only released after her family paid about US\$2,000. The other women were still there, and she does not know what happened to them.

She rushed to the hospital and found her son, who had survived four operations, and finally escaped Kirkuk with her son. She showed Human Rights Watch her son's wounds.

published on  European Country of Origin Information Network