

#ISISForum2019 Day 1: ISIS victims-turned freedom fighters & former heads of state unite in call for international tribunal

Highlights:

- *Yezidi woman from Sinjar who was enslaved by ISIS speaks of acting on behalf of all Yezidi women as she took up arms to liberate Raqqa from ISIS*
- *Survivors and families of victims of ISIS massacres on three continents shared their stories united in the demand for global solutions to ISIS*
- *Former Prime Minister of Italy calls for international community to take responsibility*
- *Former United States Congressman recognises the leadership of the SDF, YPG and YPJ*
- *Documentary film premiere reveals new evidence of collaboration between Turkey and ISIS*

Today the International Forum on ISIS began, bringing together 200 participants - approximately 30 from Europe and North America, 75 from other countries in the Middle East, and the rest from the civil society, military and administration of North East Syria - to explore challenges and solutions for bringing ISIS to justice and restoring stability to the region and globally.

The day began with presentations from those affected by ISIS' crimes – survivors of slavery, torture and massacre, and family members of those killed by ISIS. Speakers included two Yezidi women from Sinjar, Makboula Xidr Bacho and Soad Khalef; survivor of the ISIS massacre in Paris, Ines Daif; survivor of the ISIS massacre in Kobane, Aljin Ibrahim; and Nasr Osman from the Shaitat tribe in Deir ez Zour who experienced a massacre of over 700 people.

Soad Khalef, Yezidi woman from Sinjar who joined YJS (Women's Sinjar Units) after liberation, said:

"When I took part in the operation in Raqqa against ISIS, I took my revenge. But I was not just representing myself, I was representing all Yezidi women who were sold and tortured by ISIS, which is why we are calling for an international court to take place in Syria, because the realities of ISIS took place here."

Aljin Ibrahim, survivor of massacre in Kobane:

"We don't want Daesh to be taken somewhere else to be put on trial, we suffered here, they need to be tried here."

Massimo D'Alema, former Prime Minister of Italy:

"I stand in solidarity with the Peoples Protection Units and the Women's Protection Units [YPG and YPJ], your fight was on behalf of all of humanity... The international community must assume its own responsibilities. I support the idea of creating an international court, and public trials for ISIS terrorists."

Hatip Dicle, HDP, former MP in Istanbul:

"The biggest enemy of ISIS is democratic Islam.... Currently, Qatar and Turkey are the main supporters of ISIS... It is impossible to end organizations like ISIS while authoritarianism is still present in regimes such as Erdogan's Turkey."

In the afternoon, a panel of experts - Dr. Azad Ali, Dr. Michael Rubin, Dr. Bayar Mustafa Dosky, Dr. Jalal Znati, Ms. Fawza Youssef, and Dr Thomas Shmidinger - analysed the historical roots of ISIS and the philosophy of the Democratic Nation as a counter-proposal to Islamic extremism.

Ms. Fawza Youssef, a member of the Executive Committee of the Autonomous Administration of North East Syria (AANES), said:

“Building a democratic nation is the only antidote to the disease of ISIS... the AANES can be a model for all other regions in Syria.”

A new documentary - “ISIS and Turkey” - was premiered at the conference. Going beyond often-repeated evidence about the ease with which foreign ISIS fighters crossed into Syria, it shed light on the Turkish state's connections with ISIS. In the first ever interview with one of the ISIS fighters who crossed the border to attack Northeast Syria from Turkish soil with the aid of Turkish intelligence, Abed al-Rahim Silok said:

“They said the Turkish side would provide us with ammunition and food, medical and military support.”

Mohammed Saleh Nahi al-Shamari, captured ISIS member, details ISIS' formal travel arrangements with Turkey at the Tel Abyad border crossing:

“Oil, trade, goods, business opportunities, drones for example. Each invoice was more than \$1 million. I mean, night-vision scopes and cameras, weapons, ammunition...”

Common threads that emerged throughout the day included the importance of the international community to take responsibility for resolving the question of ISIS. The demand for an international tribunal to take place in Syria was echoed by many contributors, who insisted that justice must be served. Furthermore, it was asserted that for the justice to be meaningful, it had to be visible and felt by the people who suffered the most from it.

Another point of convergence was the understanding that ISIS has been defeated only as a territorial entity, but not as a social phenomenon which presents an ongoing threat to people worldwide. The mentality of ISIS survives within the prisons and camps where ISIS fighters and affiliates are detained, within states such as Turkey and Qatar, and within societies weakened by the absence of the principles of self defence, community organisation and social bonds.

Thomas McClure, Rojava Information Centre, summarised the conference thus far:

“We have seen that ISIS is a global problem and needs global solutions, which need to be rooted in the reality in which the most extensive crimes of ISIS took place. This is why experts, policy-makers, and the people who have lived through ISIS' reign of terror all want to bring ISIS to justice through an international tribunal in North East Syria.”

The conference will continue for two more days. Sessions include military, legal, cultural and social analysis of ISIS, a woman's perspective on ISIS, and proposals and solutions moving forward.

Contact press@rojawaic.com with requests for content, media or additional information.

Photos from the day are available for download here. Please credit to Rojava Information Centre. Audio and video interviews, photos, and exclusive interviews are available upon request

Additional information

- For a full list of speakers and additional quotes, email press@rojawaic.com
- [Press pack for the International Forum on ISIS 2019](#)
- ['Bringing ISIS to Justice'](#): Rojava Information Center report on the proposed international tribunal in North East Syria, July 2019

Rojava Information Center
press@rojawaic.com / <https://rojavainformationcenter.com> / [@RojavaIC](#)