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ISIS as a Mirror

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In part, the rapacious ugliness of ISIS is a reflection of the policies which formed it.

We flinch at recognizing in ISIS atrocities the embodiment of the cruelty in NATO's policies,...the callousness of Madeleine Albright evaluating the lives of Iraqi children, the swagger and glee of Hilary Clinton at Gaddafi's murder, the effects on millions of insisting on regime change in someone else's country and the Euro-American refusal to accept Syria's democratically elected president. Assad was demonized by the press and allegations of war crimes, as Saddam Hussein was, and Milosevic, and Gaddafi. In a competition of atrocities one longs for the common voice of reason, for the Chorus of Greek Tragedy, for the poetry of daily life.

The United Nations « Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic » has released a new report, "'They came to destroy': ISIS Crimes Against the Yazidis, »(1) to deal specifically with the horrific treatment of Yazidi peoples by ISIS. Much of its evidence concerns Sinjar of northern Iraq, but many of ISIS captives are kept in Syria. The Commission's report substantiates evidence of a genocide in progress against the Yazidi people in Iraq and Syria, limiting the scope of its inquiry to one minority.

Jews and Christians are often able to pay ISIS the « jizya » tax for their religious affiliation and so may escape conversion, death or slavery.(2) This option is denied Yazidis who face the outright murder of their men, the enslavement of their women, and the acting out of threats to rid the world of Yazidi people.

However ISIS is more tolerant than French Catholics of the 16th Century in the sudden slaughter of all Protestants. The religious difference doesn't have to invoke genocide. Martyrdom is avoidable. Yazidis can be spared if they convert. With respect to martyrdom, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, a history of Protestant martyrs, is generally discouraged by the intellectual management of Western societies, for its fanaticism. This aspect of religious choice isn't discussed in the report.

Much of the Commission's report deals with the institution of slavery, sexual slavery and rape, as applied to Yazidi women sold by ISIS to its soldiers. Gang rape is used as punishment. The enslavement of women or of a people is barbaric and ultimately genocidal. North Americans and Europeans are buffered from connecting genocide to slavery due to the conveniences of slavery to our national histories, and due to the lives of the very poor under capitalism, and of prisoners. In the Commission report slavery has strong emotional value as propaganda. The total deprivation of human rights, the dehumanization of women by this slavery, is traumatic information. While young girls are taken from slave mothers at

the age of nine and then sold as slaves, young boys are taken at seven, indoctrinated and trained to fight for ISIS. The report doesn't find ISIS using young boys as sex slaves (« bacha bazi »), a practice among U.S. allied and installed police, army officers and warlords of Afghanistan.(3)

While a case for genocide is made, it noticeably shies off identifying specific perpetrators.

It doesn't recognize that the attempted destruction of the group of Yazidis, is a microcosm for the destruction of the Syrian people as a national group. From January 7, 2013:

> « On Dec. 25, the UN announced it would cut food supplies to 1.5 million Syrians due to overburdening demands. Half the hospitals of a once advanced health care system, are destroyed. The U.S. has deployed patriot missiles and troops to Turkey. According to the BBC U.K. Prime Minister David Cameron says, « My message to Assad is go…He has the most phenomenal amount of blood on his hands. » Following French recognition of Syrian « rebel » forces, on Dec. 12th U.S. President Obama recognized the opposition coalition as « the legitimate representative of the Syrian people » (Globe and Mail).

The U.N. estimates 60,000 dead so far. The UN World Food Programme may have to feed 755 thousand refugees displaced in Syria and surrounding countries. A continuing genocide warning for Syrians as a national group, and particularly for targeted minorities: Adama Dieng, U.N. Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, has shown specific concern for Alawites, Armenians, Christians, Palestinians, Kurds, Turkmen, among other minority groups. Webster Griffin Tarpley has warned of an unimaginably horrible genocide all across Syria targeting Shiites, Alawites, Christians, Melkites, Maronites, Syriacs, Orthodox among all prone to victimization, if the NATO backed « rebel » forces take over the country… »(4)

Ignored, as in the destruction of Libya, is NATO's insistence that the country's democratically elected leader be replaced. This is primarily responsible for the disintegration of Syrian society, the huge number of displaced people and refugees, the 'civil war' itself. According to the Commission, outside of blaming ISIS generally and its fundamentalist interpretation of Islamic codes, the inception of ISIS isn't discussed. Why did it come into being ? To whose advantage and profit ?

Funding and arms sources are not considered.

While making a case for genocide, the specifics of prosecution are missing leaving the Commision of Inquiry's report to function primarily as a persuasion.

The Commission ignores a « tactical » complication in its selecting ISIS to accuse of obviously genocidal policies. If the Security Council agrees with the Commission proposal that genocide is committed against the Yazidi people, Council members are bound by the Convention on Genocide to intervene. If countries choose to intervene in Syria without a Security Council mandate there's a risk of (nuclear) war. It is more likely that the Security Council would refer the issue to the International Criminal Court. A resolution to do this was vetoed by Russia and China in 2014. So now the Commission encourages legal actions in individual nations as possibly the only practical current way to apply the Convention on Genocide to the actions of ISIS against the Yazidis.(5)

The 'complication' is that if major powers want to « intervene » or invade a sovereign state,

they can covertly promote a genocide which will require intervention. There's a suspicion of this in Burundi, and some likelihood in Syria. The*Washington Post* has provided evidence that the U.S. has funded the Government opposition in Syria since 2005.(6) It is suspected that ISIS has been covertly managed by the U.S.. (7) Many enemy combatants in the 'civil war' against Syria's president Assad were recruited from Libya after NATO's war on Gaddafi.(8) NATO leaders have recognized the government's opposition as the 'legitimate' government of Syria which is much like a declaration of war, with no excuse to actually invade Syria except in response to the crime of genocide.

Some have found previous Commission of Inquiry's reports slanted, partisan, favouring NATO. The Commission chairman (Brazil) has taught at Brown, Columbia, Notre Dame, and received a Guggenheim fellowship, American honours familiar to those who have earned them. Another of the three original Commission members is an American. A third was Turkish currently replaced with representatives from Thailand and Switzerland.

Mother Fadia Laham, Head of the International Team for Reconciliation in Syria, among others, has withdrawn cooperation with the Commission which is faulted for selective information gathering. Following the American lead, the Commission was led to blame the Assad government for war crimes at Al-Houla and subsequently had to modify its claims, but after these had served U.S. intentions.(9) The effectiveness of the Commission of Inquiry is limited since the Syrian government doesn't allow the Commission access to its country which is why so much of the report relies on the treatment of the Yazidi people in northern Iraq.

The report asks the International community to « Recognize ISIS's commission of the crime of genocide against the Yazidis of Sinjar »(10). In areas beyond the Syrian army's control, a case against ISIS could be made for the genocide of most minority groups within Syria. One can fault the Human Rights Council for selective application of the genocide convention, or for trying to minimize the scope of an inter-related genocide, but the basic arguments of this Commission report are recognizing a genocide. Genocide of a small group amid the national group is manageable to recognize. The genocide of entire nations of essentially Muslim peoples is unimaginable and yet provably real.

There is then a genocide warning in Syria and Iraq for the Yazidi peoples, and for each of the minorities out of favour with fundamentalist Islam or supporting the government of Syria. There is a genocide warning in both countries for the people as a national group.

To place the Commission of Inquiry's report in context, ask why a similar Commission has not applied the Convention on Genocide in such a straightforward manner to the situation of the people in Gaza, or Palestinians as a whole.

In Canada, in response to the « Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic », on what is basically a genocide of the Yazidis of Iraq, under a government created by the countries which have bombed and invaded it, the Canadian Minister of Defence, Stephane Dion, has announced ISIS is committing genocide against Yazidi's. The Liberal Party waited to recognize this until the allegation was made by the Commission of Inquiry's report. Dion assures Parliament that Canada will encourage the UN Security Council to take action.(11) The Liberals previously rejected a Conservative Party bill eager to declare the genocide in Parliament once the U.S. Secretary of Defense, John Kerry, determined that the Yazidis among others were victims of a genocide. While the U.S. military in conflict in Syria professes increasing care to avoid damage to civilians, a recent

letter signed by 51 State Department officials(12) encourages the U.S. to thoroughly bomb Syria's government forces which are the primary adversary of ISIS in Syria.

Efforts to displace President Assad are another attempt to destroy an essentially Muslim national group. Afghanistan. Iraq. Libya. Syria. The societies remain de-stabilized. International support for Assad and the country's stability would be the most immediate way to stop the genocide against the Yazidis, Christians, and Syria's other religious minorities. Among the Commission on Inquiry's recommendations, are that the Security Council turn the issue over to the ICC and that the Security Council consider the use of its powers under Article VII, but most practically it asks the government of Syria(13) to embed the Genocide Convention in its national legislation and rescue, protect and care for the Yazidi community.

In part, the rapacious ugliness of ISIS is a reflection of the policies which formed it.

Notes:

1 http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/A_HRC_32_CRP.2_en.pdf
2. #154, "'They came to destroy': ISIS Crimes Against the Yazidis, » June 15, 2016. A/HRC/32/CRP.2 Human Rights Council.
3. Anuj Chopra. « Taliban use 'honey trap' boys to kill Afghan police, » June 16, 2016, *Yahoo! news*.
4. J.B.Gerald. « 2013 Suppressed News », January 7, 2013, *nightslantern.ca*.
5. #200. A/HRC/32/CRP.2 *.loc.cit.*
6. Craig Whitlock. « U.S. secretly backed Syrian opposition groups, cables released by WikiLeaks show, » April 17, 2011, *Washington Post*(apprec. Cartalucci).
7. 14-L-0552/DIA/ 287-291, Aug. 12, 2012, Defense Intelligence Agency. « Newly-Declassified U.S. Government Documents: The West Supported the Creation of ISIS, » May 24, 2015, *Washingtons Blog*.
8. Tony Cartalucci. » The Architecture of Insurgency, » 2012. *War on Syria* [access:< https://drive.google.com/file/d/0Bzf5hXPESLSdbTd0V2dIY3hvVGM/view?pref=2 >].
9. "US ready to act on Syria outside UN?" May 31, 2013, *RT*.
10. #212(a). A/HRC/32/CRP.2.*loc.cit.*
11. « Stéphane Dion declares ISIS killings of Yazidi people a genocide », June 16, 2016, *CBC News*.
12. Jason Ditz. « State Dept Officials Demand US Attack Assad Instead of ISIS in Syria, » June 16, 2016, *antiwar.com*.
13. #208. A/HRC/32/CRP.2. *loc.cit.*

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