

The threat against Shingal still exists

On the occasion of the 8th anniversary of the genocide of the Yazidi people at the hands of the IS in the Shingal region

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Content

- 3| Is Shingal Still Under Attack?
- 3| A Short Reminder: What happened on 3 August?
- 4| IS Occupation of Shingal
- 6| Responsibilities of States in Genocide and Feminicide
- 7| Why is Turkey Attacking Shingal?
- 8| Iraqi Army also intensifies its attacks against Shingal
- 9| Creating oneself from one's own ashes
- 10| Response to the Feminicide with the Women's Revolution
- 11| Requirements

Is Shingal Still Under Attack?

Shingal came on the agenda with the genocidal attacks of the IS. Until now, parliaments of different countries, especially the UN and the European Parliament, have recognised the massacre as genocide. Finally, also the German Federal Parliament unanimously recognised the attacks in Shingal as genocide. However, despite this, the attacks against Shingal and its people have not stopped. On the one hand, the Turkish state regularly attacks Shingal from the air and causes deaths of civilians, on the other hand, the Iraqi army attacks Shingal and tries to put into practice a treaty that the Shingal autonomous administration is not included in and which is not accepted by the society.

A Short Reminder: What happened on 3 August?

Eight years ago, on 3 August 2014, the Shingal region within the borders of Nineveh province in the north of Iraq was attacked by IS gangs with their black flags. Shingal is the settlement centre of the community of the Yazidi faith. The Yazidi community has been subjected to attacks called “Ferman” 73 times throughout history because they do not belong to the known monotheistic religion. The Genocide attack led by IS has gone down in history as the 74th “Ferman” and has the characteristics of a much more comprehensive attack than the previous ones.

It is almost impossible to express what happened in Shingal with words. In the 21st century, in front of the eyes of the world, the Yazidi people were faced with a genocidal attack without being defended by the Iraqi and Peshmerga forces responsible in Shingal. Shingal was razed to the ground, thousands of people were brutally murdered, thousands of women and children were kidnapped, sold in slave markets, subjected to psychological, cultural, physical and sexual attacks, and hundreds of thousands of people left everything to save their lives and fell on migration routes.

The occupation and destruction attacks of IS in Shingal and the resistance against it lasted for more than a year, people tried to hold on to life and defend Shingal under extraordinary conditions for more than a year. Thanks to this resistance, Shingal was officially liberated from IS occupation on 13 November 2015. Although IS has been pushed back in Shingal since then, the effects of genocide and feminicide continue until today. Shingal will continue to face new threats and attacks without healing the wounds caused by these genocide and feminicide attacks, which have left deep wounds on the Yazidi community in general, especially on the Yazidi people living in Shingal. However, despite all this, the Yazidi community living in Shingal does not step back from the struggle to heal their wounds, to build their living conditions and to organise themselves with the concern that new attacks will occur at any moment.

IS Occupation of Shingal

After occupying Mosul, IS attacked Shingal with the heavy weapons it obtained there. Shingal is officially under the administration of the Iraqi central government. The status of the city was uncertain after the Iraq war. According to Article 140 of the Iraqi constitution, a referendum was to be held to clarify whether it would remain under the Iraqi central government or the Kurdish Autonomous Region. However, since this referendum has not been held so far, the status of Shingal is still uncertain. At the time of the attack, Shingal was under the administration of the Iraqi central government and Peshmerga forces were responsible for its security. According to official figures, 12 thousand Peshmerga forces of the “Kurdistan Democratic Party” (KDP) were on duty in Shingal before the IS attacks. However, the KDP administration, which declared that it would defend the Yazidis when IS attacked, withdrew its 12 thousand Peshmerga forces without any explanation and without providing any protection to the Yazidis. The demands of the Yazidis who wanted weapons from the KDP Peshmerga to defend themselves against IS were ignored, and in this way the Yazidi people were left defenceless before the brutality of IS.

As a result of the “People’s Defence Forces” (HPG) and “Unity of the free woman – Star” (YJA Star) forces and “People’s Defence Units” (YPG)/ “Women’s Defence Units” (YPJ) forces, the Rojava defence forces, taking action against IS attacks and opening the liberation corridor by fighting to save the people, tens of thousands of people crossed into Rojava and escaped the massacre of IS. About 400 HPG/YJA Star and YPG/YPJ fighters were martyred in this war.

In this brutal attack of IS, about 50 thousand people - elderly, children, women and children alike - climbed the mountains of Shingal in the 50-degree heat to escape. Many of them, especially children, lost their lives due to hunger and thirst. Today, it is still possible to see hundreds of Yazidis living in tents near the mountain, because the feeling that the



Yezidis who fled to the mountains of Sinjar during the genocide by IS in 2014.

danger is not over is still alive.

According to local sources, 500,000 people fled Shingal during the genocide attacks in 2014. Official figures put the number at 360,000. Today, 250,000 Yazidis are still forced to live in different parts of Iraq, Turkey, Syria and some in Europe.

It is not possible to determine the exact number of people who lost their lives at that time, but according to official figures, the number of bodies identified is around 1,500. However, according to the research, it is thought that approximately 5,000 people were brutally killed by IS in these attacks. Local sources state that 87 mass graves have been identified so far, but only 36 of them have been opened so far. IS has systematically carried out its genocidal attacks against the Yazidi community in Shingal by basing them on the policies of a feminicide. In the places it occupied, it kidnapped women and children in buses and killed hundreds of them. It is known that approximately 7,000 Yazidi women and children were abducted during that period. It is estimated that they kidnapped a total of 10 thousand people from Shingal, including those they kidnapped. Women were sold in markets as sex slaves and subjected to inhumane practices. IS also forced the abducted women and children to change their religion. After 'Islamising' the children, they used them as fighters in their own dark wars and systematically destroyed Yazidi belief centres.

According to a UN statement, 3,200 Yazidi women and children were captured by IS in 2016. Approximately 3,500 women and children were liberated during this process. According to statements made in 2020, it is stated that 2,900 women and children are still missing. Today, there is no news from approximately 2,700 people.

What happened is the first genocide attack of the 21st century. According to the statement of the UN Commission, the following crimes against humanity were committed by IS in Shingal; killing, forced conversion, enslavement, human trafficking, rape, forced migration and training Yazidi children as soldiers in IS terrorist camps.

The genocide in Shingal has so far been officially recognised by the UN, the European Parliament, Belgium, the Netherlands, Armenia, Australia, Scotland and finally the German Parliament. However, the legal and political requirements arising from this have still not been fulfilled.



Yezidis who fled during the genocide by IS.

Responsibilities of States in Genocide and Feminicide

While the responsibilities of the states in the genocide and feminicide attacks on the Yazidi community in Shingal have not yet been officially held to account and measures have not been taken to prevent the repetition of the genocide and feminicide attacks, it is not only politically incorrect but also unscrupulous and inhumane to try to implement new policies and projects by ignoring the will of the Yazidi people.

In June, the UK-based “Yazidi Justice Committee” (YJC) published a very important dossier in cooperation with 5 lawyers and human rights organisations. After 3 years of work, the dossier titled ‘State responsibility and genocide against Yazidis’ concludes that the states of Turkey, Iraq and Syria are responsible for the genocide. It finds the Turkish state guilty of involvement in the genocide, Iraq and Syria guilty of not preventing the genocide and demands their prosecution. While the Yazidis are still recovering from the genocide attacks that started on 3 August 2014, while the fate of approximately 10 thousand people is still unclear, while 250 thousand Yazidis are still living in camps outside their settlements, and while all these atrocities have not been held to account and justice has not been established, Shingal is still the victim of different political calculations. While the responsibilities of these three countries in the genocide are obvious, there is still a very systematic attack concept on Shingal. In particular, it is obvious that Turkey is the main force of these attacks. The Turkish state, which supported the genocidal forces yesterday, today wants to destroy the will of the people of Shingal who want to build their future with their own will.



After Turkish bombardment of Şengal in February 2022.

Why is Turkey Attacking Shingal?

It is known that Shingal is the main settlement of the Yazidi people, who have kept the oldest culture of the Kurds alive until today. This attack reality is part of the physical and cultural genocide policies that the anti-Kurdish forces have been implementing against the Kurds for years. Destroying the Yazidi people and dehumanising Shingal is a fundamental part of this policy. However, beyond this, due to geopolitical reasons, Shingal has an important position for different states.

Shingal is a large plain surrounded by mountains 120 kilometres from Mosul. Since Shingal is located on the Iraq-Syria border, it is strategically important for both IS and Turkey. Although IS originally planned to seize Shingal and use it as a corridor for its forces in Syria, the main reason why the Shingal genocide did not end as IS aimed was the YPG/YPJ forces coming to help in Rojava. Turkey, which is very uncomfortable with this connection between Rojava and Shingal, has tried every method to cut this connection and has not refrained from seriously supporting IS by making its calculations through this.

Shingal also has a strategic importance for controlling Kirkuk and Mosul oil. In this respect, the fact that the Yazidi people did not leave Shingal, but held on to it despite all the attacks and the self-administration model they developed after the edict disturbed different powers, especially Turkey and Iraq, whose interests were damaged. They saw this situation as an obstacle to the realisation of their own plans. It is known that the Turkish state actively supported the edict carried out by IS gangs in Shingal. The Turkish state, which could not achieve the desired result with IS, has never stopped its threats on Shingal and always keeps the Shingal issue on the agenda in Iraq and international relations.

The Turkish state first attacked Shingal with warplanes on 15 June 2020 and 3 civilians were killed in this attack. Against this attack of the Turkish state in violation of international law - a few powers condemned only verbally and in writing and asked for the attacks to stop, but no international mechanism stepped in and there were no sanctions - the Turkish state, which saw this situation as approval, has been continuing its attacks at regular intervals since then. Since the defeat of IS, the Turkish state has carried out 15 attacks against Yazidis. On 17 August 2021, in the attacks that targeted a public hospital and massacred health workers, prominent figures of the Yazidi community and fighters against IS were martyred.

Iraqi Army also intensifies its attacks against Shingal

On 9 October 2020, within the framework of the compromise reached between Baghdad and Erbil with the mediation of the UN, approximately 10 new checkpoints were established around Shingal and steps were taken to transfer control to the central government. This process, which creates serious disturbances within the Yazidi community, still exists.

As a result of the Turkish state forcing the Iraqi state on Shingal, Iraq also intensifies its attacks. From time to time, the Iraqi army attempts to take Shingal back under its control and dissolve the autonomous administration and self-defence forces. There are control points of the Iraqi army in Shingal. Despite this, practices that will create tension flare up intermittently. Finally, on 18 April 2022, on Kazimi's instructions, Iraqi army forces tried to seize the Shingal "Digorî Êzîdxan Asayîş" and some points around Jidale and Sikîniya on the 47th road. When this attack attempt was met with resistance by "Resistance Units Shingal" (YBŞ) forces, clashes took place. Then the Iraqi army sent tanks and howitzer cannons to the region. There was a state of war, albeit for a short time. As a result of diplomatic initiatives between the parties, the Iraqi army forces withdrew and the clashes stopped, but the tension still continues.

Since March, Iraq has begun construction of a 3.75-metre-high, one-metre-thick wall from Fishhabur in the Turkey-Iraq-Syria triangle to the southwestern border of Shingal. The length of this line is approximately 200 kilometres. Parallel to the wall, a wire fence is being built five kilometres inside the border. It is not difficult to guess that this project is also in line with the demand of the Turkish state. As it is known, the Yazidis were saved from genocide thanks to the corridor opened by the YPG/YPJ forces from the Syrian side by clashing with IS. Of course, it should not be forgotten that the closure of this road is reminiscent of a state of siege among the Yazidi people.

Finally, Kadhimi appointed Najm Juburi, the governor of Nineveh (Mosul), as the district governor of Shingal, but he had to withdraw this decision in the face of intense reactions.



Yazidi women condemn the Iraqi army's attempt to invade Shengal, 2022

Creating oneself from one's own ashes

When there was a genocide attack in Shingal, thousands of Yazidis did not leave their land but stayed and defended their land despite everything. They struggled for life under very difficult conditions. Now, instead of running away from these attacks, they decided to take their fate in their hands and organise themselves to prevent new edicts. The authorities, who were responsible for their security for hundreds of years, did not fulfil their responsibilities and left them face to face with genocide every time. The natural conclusion to be drawn from this is to build a future based on their own strength. In line with this important and revolutionary decision they took, they developed their self-organisation militarily and politically. Today, there are YBŞ and “Women’s units Shingal” (YJŞ) self-defence forces affiliated to the Shingal People’s Council. Likewise, the people of Shingal organised their political will with the parliamentary model and built the autonomous administration of Shingal in 2015.

Firstly, the formation of self-government is the most meaningful response to genocide. This model they developed without leaving Iraq but without surrendering themselves to genocide is a very important democratic life move. It is a model that develops the culture of living together against the sectarian wars, religious wars, sexist practices and energy wars that Iraq is being dragged into. The autonomous administration does not only consist of Yazidis. There is an autonomous administration that works with sufficient participation from Shias, Sunnis, Muslim Kurds and Christians. The people of Shingal constitute a radical alternative to the historical problem in Iraq. Yazidi women respond to the slavery status to which women in Iraq and the Middle East are condemned with the experience they have developed. In this respect, the process of the Yazidis to stop the genocide and fight against it is a women’s and freedom revolution.



Demonstration in Shengal

Response to the Feminicide with the Women's Revolution

The genocide attack on 3 August 2014 was brought onto the political agenda of the whole world, mostly because of the horrible massacre of Yazidi women. The misogyny of IS ideology was exposed more concretely in the reality of Shingal. The fact that all ideologies based on power and exploitation are based on an anti-women attitude and that the enslaved woman is the reality of the society opened to slavery was once again revealed in Shingal.

This reactionary ideology, which removes women from being living beings in their own right and turns them into the object of men, has subjected the women they kidnapped to total exploitation by selling them in the slave markets they created. The stories of the women who were captured by IS are of such a nature and content that it would drive them to the brink of insanity.

As in Rojava, we witnessed that women have been reborn as if risen from the ashes, like a phoenix, against the genocide and feminicide actions imposed in Shingal.

The life of the women of Shingal changed radically after 3 August 2014. Today, the women of Shingal have organised themselves as "Freedom Movement of Yazidi Women" (TAJE) in a unique and autonomous way. With their bitter experiences, Yazidi women have understood that self-defence is more important than bread and water. The film *Heza*, which has recently received one award after another, deals with exactly this reality. *Heza* is the story of a Yazidi woman who was captured during the IS attack and became a fighter after being freed from captivity. The women of Shingal are in a process of development like flowers blooming in spring despite the pitch darkness they have lived through. Their efforts to gain



Sinjar Women's Protection Units, YPJ

a significant level of consciousness, to organise themselves and to take part as subjects in all areas of life contain a serious potential for freedom and democracy not only for Yazidi women but also for the entire Yazidi society.

Iraq, which is on the brink of bankruptcy and destruction as a result of its instability, is far from understanding what a great evil it imposes by insisting on the old centralist structure by destroying this island of freedom. However, this democracy and freedom project sprouting in Shingal offers an important opportunity for the whole of Iraq.

In this short article, we have tried to make it visible that IS is not only responsible for what happened in Shingal. We, as the international public opinion, especially international organisations, are also responsible. Although we are not responsible for the genocide attack, it is an undeniable reality that each and every one of us has a responsibility in clarifying this genocide, holding those responsible to account, healing the wounds of the Yazidi community and preventing new attacks. With a stronger solidarity and public pressure, we can contribute to the development of solutions for Shingal that take into account the interests of the community living there and to force both international organisations and states to abandon their mistaken policies.

As women of the world, we can also recognise the feminicide of Yazidi women as a crime against ourselves and launch a more effective universal campaign against this crime. Being ethical, being democratic, being modern, being a radical women's fighter requires taking the victims of the Shingal massacre under our wing and taking a stand against the forces that caused this atrocity.

Requirements

On 30 July, an International Women's Conference was held in Bagdad, the capital of Iraq. We accept the demands expressed in the final declaration of the conference. We call on all international organisations and world public opinion to take action in line with these demands:

The Final Declaration of the International Women's Conference held in Baghdad, the capital of Iraq, on 30 August 2022 with the slogan 'We will fight against the Shingal Genocide with the Free Will of Women':

On 3 August 2014, the genocide and feminicide attacks on Shingal have deeply wounded us all. We consider these attacks, especially against Yazidi women, as attacks against all women. Unfortunately, this genocide attack in Shingal was not the first in Iraq. Between 1986-1989 the genocidal attacks against the Kurdish people under the orders of the then President Saddam Hussein and the genocidal practices against the Iraqi Shiite Arabs in 1991 remain vivid in the memories. Therefore, inhumane practices such as genocide and feminicide are based on ideologies and policies centred on power and exploitation.

We state that we will wage an effective struggle against sexism, nationalism, sectarianism and religionism, in order to prevent any gender, people and religious community from being subjected to similar atrocities in the future. We sincerely believe that we will make a significant contribution to the development of democracy, freedoms and peace in the countries where we live, if only we, as women, develop and organise ourselves on the basis of free will.



We believe that these systematic attacks on the people of Shingal have not been analysed by any state and institution with the necessary rigour yet and that those responsible have not been brought to account. Although the status of Shingal was disputed, on 3 August 2014, Shingal was administratively under the responsibility of the Iraqi central government and security under the responsibility of the Kurdistan Regional Government. Despite this fact, the responsibilities of both authorities (Iraq and KRG) in this Genocide/Feminicide attack have still not been addressed and analysed.

Likewise, the failure to investigate and prosecute other countries, especially Turkey, which supported the terrorist organisation ISIS, the enemy of humanity and women, which carried out these attacks, is not only a shame, but also leaves the way open for new massacres. We attach importance to the report published by the Yazidi Justice Committee (YJC) in July 2022 under the title 'State Responsibility and the Genocide of the Yazidis'.

We therefore call on international organisations (in particular the UN and the International War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague) to investigate the allegations made in this report. The UN, the European Parliament and many national parliaments have recognised the atrocities committed in Shingal as Genocide. We welcome these decisions and call on other parliaments and international institutions to officially recognise this Genocide and Feminicide. In particular, we demand that all countries and institutions that recognise Genocide take action to prosecute those responsible. There should be an international effort for the liberation of thousands of Yazidi women and children who are still held captive by ISIS. Likewise, the existing obstacles must be removed in order for the Yazidi people, who were forced to leave their lands and live in camps under very difficult conditions due to the 74th Genocide on Yazidis, to return to their villages and towns again. We call on the Kurdistan Democratic Party- KDP, which makes the return of the Yazidi people difficult in various ways, to abandon this policy. Once again, we call on all international powers to support the compensation of the damages suffered in the war, to clear the settlements of landmines, planted by the gangs and to rebuild the destroyed city of Shingal.

Until now, feminicide has not been recognised as a war crime under international law. We demand that the feminicide attacks in Shingal to be recognised as a war crime and as a crime against humanity by all relevant international institutions, especially the UN.

We defend the right to self-defence of all peoples, communities and beliefs under oppression in the face of the threat of genocide and feminicide, and we declare that we see the self-defence of the people and women of Shingal, which is being prevented in various ways today, as a legitimate right. We state that all different communities have the right to organise themselves and that this is one of the most fundamental and legitimate rights. Therefore, we call on all those who are pro-democracy and human rights to support the existing self-governance structures of the people of Shingal.

Shingal was razed to the ground in 2014 as a result of the attacks and clashed on it. Until now, the people of Shingal have tried to establish basic needs such as hospitals, schools and temples with their own means. While international institutions and states, especially Iraq, are expected to help heal these wounds, the attacks against Shingal are carried out by Turkey and Iraq this time. We condemn all the attacks carried out by the Turkish state against the Yazidi people living in Shingal and demand an immediate end to the attacks. We see it

as essential and therefore demand, that the airspace of Shingal is closed by the responsible forces in the face of the aggressions of the Turkish state.

It is obvious that pursuing dry political interests by disregarding the sensitivities and fears of a community (people) that has been subjected to genocide is not only an abortive state policy, but also far from producing solutions. If a solution is sincerely sought for Shingal, we believe that this is possible only and only by recognising the will of the people living in Shingal and including this will in the negotiations for a solution. As seen in the agreement signed on 9 October 2020 by the Iraqi central government and the Kurdistan Regional Government, we do not consider any decisions taken without the inclusion of the Yazidi community and institutions living in Shingal as legitimate and we demand that the decisions made without the participation of Yazidis be abandoned immediately. If there is to be a solution in Shingal, the only way to do this is to recognise the self-administration will of the people of Shingal.

Women, who are the biggest victims of the 3 August attacks, must be included in all decisions regarding Shingal. For this reason, we say that any decision that does not include the will of women cannot be durable or just. Therefore, it is necessary to know that any project that does not reflect the will of women does not produce lasting solutions.

ISIS carried out brutal attacks on Yazidis by inciting hatred through religious divisions. On this occasion, we call on all religious and belief groups that are not complicit in this crime, to show solidarity with the Yazidi people and to develop interfaith dialogue.

As all the women present at the conference, we state that the best response to this brutality inflicted on Yazidi women is the solidarity and organisation of women universally, and we call on all the women of the world to bring those responsible to account for the feminicide in Shingal



International Iraqi Women's Conference on feminicide on Yazidi women, July 2022



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