

The Nobel Peace Prize Finally Goes to Someone Who Deserves It (Part Three)

by Hugh Fitzgerald



So far, Nadia Murad appears not to be pulling her punches when it comes to Islam. In 2016, she addressed the UN Security Council, describing how she had been gang raped for a failed escape attempt. All of this, she said, was considered legal under ISIS rule – which dictates that Yazidis, because they do not practice Islam, can be taken as slaves on religious grounds. “They sold girls, girls that were underage, because ISIS considered that permissible under Islamic law,” she said. “They came not just to attack certain people, but they came for all Yazidis.”

Nadia Murad has so far in her travels addressed audiences in Ireland, in France, in the U.K., in Canada, in Germany, and in the United States, [telling her tale](#), and the tale of her people:

“Four years ago I was one of thousands of Yazidi women kidnapped by Islamic State and sold into slavery. I endured rape, torture and humiliation at the hands of these militants before I escaped.

“I was relatively lucky. Many Yazidi girls and women went through worse and for much longer.

“Over 2,000 are still missing. Many have been killed.

“In early August 2014 Islamic State invaded the Sinjar region in northern Iraq with the mission of exterminating the Yazidis. They called us a ‘pagan minority’, and because we

don't have a holy book we have been described as 'devil worshippers.'"

"In Kocho, my village of 1,800 people, over 300 men were shot and their bodies buried in irrigation ditches. Six of them were my own brothers.

"Since then the Yazidis have received sympathy and solidarity all over the world. Rightly, many countries and the United Nations have recognised the genocide committed against us by Islamic State. But we now need concrete action to get justice and allow us to rebuild our community and homes. We have been displaced and dispersed around the world. Many countries, including Germany, Canada, and the United States have given us refuge."

Now she has the Nobel Prize, which she can permanently use as a mighty megaphone to spread her story, and the stories of other Yazidis, across the globe. She is being helped by the world's most mediagenic and celebrated lawyer, Amal Clooney, who has become the legal advocate for Yazidi victims of atrocities.

It will be fascinating to see how the Arab and Muslim media report on this prize to Nadia Murad, and on her campaign to describe the fate of Yazidis at Muslim hands. So far – it's early yet – they are mostly observing radio silence, trying to figure out how to cover the story. Al Jazeera did report, in passing, that the Islamic State had tried to make her convert to Islam, without recognizing that all Muslims are supposed to try to convert Infidels.

Will the Arab media focus on the one Muslim family that helped her escape from ISIS, as if that family should make us overlook all the Muslims who were not willing to help? Furthermore, should that one decent family make us overlook all the Muslims who engaged in the mass rape of Yazidi girls, and mass killings of Yazidi men? Will Muslim reporters insist,

implausibly, that just as the Arabs and Jews used to have such good relations (“we got along with them just fine until the Zionists arrived”), so too “for centuries we Muslims got along perfectly well with the Yazidis – it’s only these Islamic State extremists who have been attacking them”? In fact, for centuries, under Ottoman rule, and until today, Yazidis have been persecuted as “devil worshippers” by Muslims, both Arabs and Turks. Constant attempts have been made to force them to convert to Islam, though in the past nothing quite as bad as the atrocities they have recently endured apparently occurred.

There are now 400,000 Yazidis still living in northern Iraq. They deserve to survive. Will they be given protection, so that they can remain in their ancestral homeland? Can the Iraqi government be trusted to provide it, or will it require Western forces, having armed the Yazidis so that they can participate in their own defense, to ensure the safety of the remaining Yazidis, with some kind of cordon sanitaire? Let’s find out what Nadia Murad thinks would make the most sense. She’s not just earned her Nobel as few others have, but even more important, she’s earned the right to be listened to on the fate, both tragic and hopeful, of her tiny people.

First published in