



THE ALL-PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP
on Women, Peace & Security

All Party-Parliamentary Group on Women, Peace and Security
Meeting with the Free Yezidi Foundation
15th September 2015

The APPG-WPS hosted three speakers from the Free Yezidi Foundation during this meeting:

Pari Ibrahim, Executive Director, spoke about the persecution of the Yezidis in Iraqi Kurdistan and sexual enslavement of Yezidi women by ISIS which led her to set up the organisation. The Foundation works in IDP camps to provide services for survivors of violence, including social and therapeutic support. Its achievements include opening the first women and children's centre for Yezidis in Kurdistan this month. The Foundation also recently hosted a visit to Kurdistan by Luis Moreno-Ocampo, former Chief Prosecutor for the International Criminal Court (ICC) to determine whether the violence against the Yezidis should be recognised as genocide and an ICC investigation should be opened.

Dr Derek Farrell, an expert and practitioner in psychology and trauma care and member of the Foundation's Executive Board, described about the immense level of trauma experienced by Yezidi women, many of whom are still living in fear of further attacks even after having escaped ISIS, leading to a state of hyper-vigilance and social isolation. He described how the Free Yezidi Foundation is filling a key gap by providing short and long-term psychological support for people who have experienced trauma, and highlighted the Foundation's need for funding to continue this important work.

David Sklar, former advisor to the Kurdistan Regional Government and also a member of the Foundation's Executive Board, talked of the difficulties of estimating the number of women being held by ISIS, as the fate of many of those who have been taken is not known. He described the complexity and practical challenges of attempts to find women being held by ISIS and return them to their communities. He also highlighted the need to ensure that donor funds reach grassroots organisations acting on the ground.

A discussion followed the presentations. This touched on the stigmatisation of survivors of sexual violence who return to their communities, however the encouraging response of a Yezidi community leader in publicly welcoming back women was highlighted, along with the need to recognise that stories in the media often focus on the most extreme cases. GAPS Interim Director Caroline Green highlighted the upcoming High-Level Review of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security in October this year, and the World Humanitarian Summit in March next year, as key opportunities to ensure that the issues raised during this meeting are on the world leaders' agendas, particularly the need for a gender-sensitive response to humanitarian crisis and the key role of grassroots women's rights organisations in this.

The meeting was chaired by Baroness Hodgson of Abinger CBE, co-chair of the APPG-WPS.

More information on the Free Yezidi Foundation can be found at <https://www.freeyezidi.org/>. Please see some photos of the meeting below.



Baroness Hodgson with Dr Derek Farrell and Pari Ibrahim of the Free Yezidi Foundation



The meeting brought together participants from Parliament, civil society and academia.