

FROM THE DESK OF

NADIA MURAD

Nadia Murad is a 26-year-old Yazidi woman who advocates on behalf of her community and survivors of genocide. She was among the thousands of Yazidi women who were abducted, raped, and enslaved by the self-proclaimed Islamic State (ISIS). She spent approximately one month in captivity. This includes an initial period when Nadia's village was under siege by ISIS; a second period when she was held as a sex slave at different ISIS sites; and a final short period in which Nadia was in hiding in a family home in the ISIS-controlled territory until she was able to escape. Nadia suffered the loss of six of her nine brothers who were slaughtered by ISIS in the Kocho massacre. Thousands of Yazidi men and older Yazidi women were murdered, including Nadia's mother.

Nadia practices the Yazidi religion, which is indigenous to northern Iraq and also found in parts of Syria and Turkey. This ancient faith preserves pre-Islamic and pre-Zoroastrian traditions. Not recognized as "people of the book" by Islamic Law, the Yazidis have repeatedly faced genocidal campaigns and discrimination over many centuries. Brutal treatment drove them into their mountainous homelands where they persevered in relative isolation.

The ISIS genocide that began on August 3, 2014, now threatens the future of the Yazidi people in Iraq. Nadia grew up in the Iraqi village of Kocho, a quiet agricultural area that had good relations with its neighbors, both Christian and Muslim (Arab, Kurdish, and Turkmen). Nadia attended secondary school and hoped to become a history teacher or make-up artist. Her peaceful life was brutally interrupted when ISIS attacked her homeland in Sinjar with the intention of ethnically cleansing Iraq of all Yazidis.

Advocacy Work

Nadia is the founder and president of [Nadia's Initiative](#). Nadia's Initiative is dedicated to rebuilding communities in crisis and advocating globally for victims of violence. Much of Nadia Murad's advocacy work is focused on meeting with global leaders to raise awareness of ISIS; their genocidal campaign against the Yazidi people and its consequences. Nadia's Initiative actively works to persuade governments and other organizations to financially support efforts to rebuild Sinjar – the Yazidi homeland destroyed by ISIS – and to support victims of sexual violence.

Nadia's Initiative challenges world leaders to act – to make "never again" a reality, not an empty promise. Words without action inflict the same harm and suffering as the perpetrators of mass atrocities and sexual violence.

Nadia's Initiative believes the world must strive to act in a concerted humanitarian capacity, overcoming political and cultural divisions. A better future for women, children, and persecuted minorities is possible if global leaders consistently, and without reservation, prioritize clear

humanitarian needs over politics and war. The information below highlights some of the work Nadia's Initiative is currently engaged in.

HEALTH

Nadia's Initiative is working to build a new hospital in Sinjar, the main city south of Sinjar Mountain. With funds from the French government, Nadia's Initiative is working with implementing partner and French NGO, Chaine de l'Espoir (CDE), to build a new hospital over the next three years. Currently, the Iraqi government is assigning a plot of land for the new construction. In an effort to respond to medical needs in the interim period, CDE and Nadia's Initiative are building an Operating Theater in the wing of the current hospital building.

LIVELIHOODS

During their attacks on Yazidis in Sinjar, ISIS destroyed and burned hundreds of farms and agricultural fields after they looted all farm owners' property and belongings. These practices were intended to prevent Yazidis from returning home.

Nadia's Initiative is working with local organizations in Sinjar to rehabilitate these fields and provide owners with essential needs will enable them to return to their homes and rely on their crops as a sustainable source for their livelihood.

EDUCATION

Thanks to a generous grant from the Belgian government, Nadia's Initiative is in the first stages of building a school in Sinjar with local implementing partner Eyzidi Organization for Documentation.

DE-MINING

Nadia's Initiative is working with the U.S. State Department and the Mines Advisory Group to implement de-mining efforts in the Sinjar region. These efforts are important to ensure the return of the hundreds of thousands of Yazidis still internationally displaced in Iraq and other IDP camps in the region.

JUSTICE

Working with human rights lawyer Amal Clooney, Nadia's Initiative brought the first prosecution (in the world) of international crimes committed by ISIS militants against Yazidi victims to court.

VOICE FOR SURVIVORS

Nadia Muard continues to speak out in the media to build greater global awareness of sexual violence and the needs of its victims. Humanitarian concerns of survivors are frequently overlooked or mischaracterized in the international press.

REPARATIONS FOR SURVIVORS

Nadia's Initiative has been advocating governments to support reparations for survivors in Iraq and globally in collaboration with co-recipient of the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize, Dr. Denis Mukwege. The idea of reparations for survivors has already received financial support from the government of France and political support from the government of Iraq.

Awards

In 2018, Nadia Murad was the co-recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize. In 2016, she received the Council of Europe's Vaclav Havel Award for Human Rights and the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought. During this time, she became the UN's first Goodwill Ambassador for the Dignity of Survivors of Human Trafficking. She also received the Clinton Global Citizen Award and the Peace Prize from the United Nations Association of Spain.

Publications

Nadia Murad has published a New York Times Bestselling memoir titled *The Last Girl* in multiple languages in order to share her story and advocate for other survivors, including those still in captivity.