

Interview with Lamyā Haji Bashār*

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Can you tell briefly your history?

I am a Yezidi girl, born in a small village called Kocho, Sinjar region. I was 15 years old, as ISIS attacked the Yezidis in Sinjar. My parents, both brothers and many other relatives were executed by ISIS fighter, because we refused to convert to Islam. Women, girls and children have been enslaved. We were treated as spoil of war and were sold many times among terrorists. I was sold five times among different ISIS fighters. Each time I tried to escape. I was trutztet, beaten and raped. By the fifth time I could manage to escape with two other girls. Unfortunately one of my friends pressed on a Landmine that has exploded. Both girls died, I lost my eyes and was completely burned. I was nearby to die, but I was happy to be successful to escape from those monsters. The Yezidi human rights activist Mirza Dinnayi brought me through his humanitarian organisation Luftbrücke Irak to Germany for medical reasons. The doctors could save one of my eyes and helped me to recover.

Why you have decided to tell your history to the world and what the role of memory for Yazidis people?

Because I saw and heard the screaming of the Yezidi women and children in the slavery of ISIS. I feel the suffering of my community. And I believe that such in-

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justice shouldn't happen to any other community in the world. Telling my story and stories like mine is important to awaken the world about atrocities against women during the war.

Your experience can be helpful for women and girls that passed situations similar to you but also for people that has to define interventions in this kind of context. So: We should all work together to stop such kind of crimes, Genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. The international community should protect innocent civilians, especially the women and children from these crimes.

When you escaped (or were rescued) from Isis captivity and you were back to your community, what was the most difficult thing? And what were your thoughts and feelings?

The most difficult moment was to hear the information about my parents and other relatives. My both rescued sisters and some other family members were brought to Germany. I was suddenly alone with my uncle, who was himself an only survivor of the massacre in Kocho.

Which were the relations and the activities within the community that helped you to look forward to overcome your trauma and to see a better future?

The encouragement and personal support that I got from Mr Dinnayi to overcome my trauma, and the quick resettlement to Germany to be reunified with the rest of my family, was the first step to the recovery. One of the most important moments was my first appearance in the European Parliament. I couldn't see very well, Mirza had to take my hand and accompany me from a meeting to other, after is asked him to join his activities for the Yezidi issue. I could see the solidarity and could see the tears of the representatives of the European people, when I was telling them our story. I felt the impact, and saw a victory over ISIS monsters.

Why did you decided to moved to Germany? How is your experience in Germany? Is it easy to preserve your identity and what is the role of a yazidis woman in Germany?

There are two reasons for my resettlement to Germany. The first one was, without Germany I would loss my eye and couldn't survive my injuries, not only the physical injuries but also mental wounds. And the second reason was to join my sisters, who have been resettled through German project in 2015.

Germany gave me new perspectives of life, not only recovery and treatment. I could join the school again. I became one of the voice for voiceless women and children, victims of war.

I think we can protect our identity in Germany as well. Yezidi is a peaceful community and can be well integrated. The women have relatively a good position in the Yezidi community comparing with the role of women in other neighbour societies in our original countries. Yezidi women could also approve their strength and power during the genocide. We have nowadays many Yezidi wom-

en who are nationally and internationally active, who are defending the rights of other women not only the Yezidis.

To be a testimonial of thousands of girls and women that were victims of violence is a difficult task. What are your feelings carrying on this role? What is the main challenge do you face?

It is not easy to have the role and duty to defend the others while you are also vulnerable. But I get my power from the painful experiences that I had, each time I tell myself, the suffer that I underwent should not happen to any other girl. Therefore I have to work harder and harder to bring my voice everywhere, until we stop the crimes whenever they occur.