



RESPONSE TO PETITION

Prepare in English and French marking 'Original Text' or 'Translation'

PETITION No.: **421-01286**

BY: **Ms. REMPEL (CALGARY NOSE HILL)**

DATE: **MAY 2, 2017**

PRINT NAME OF SIGNATORY: **SIGNED BY THE HONOURABLE CHRYSIA FREELAND**

Response by the Minister of Foreign Affairs

SIGNATURE

Minister or Parliamentary Secretary

SUBJECT

Crimes against humanity

ORIGINAL TEXT

REPLY

Canada unequivocally condemns the terrible atrocities and widespread human rights abuses perpetrated by Daesh against religious and ethnic communities in Iraq and Syria, including Yazidis, Christians, Shia Muslims, Mandaeans, Druze, Kak'ais and Shabaks.

The UN's Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria (COI) found that Daesh's brutal acts of violence constitute crimes against humanity, war crimes, and in the case of the Yazidis of Sinjar, genocide. Based on these findings, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs made a statement in the House of Commons on June 16, 2016, acknowledging the findings of the COI report, and declaring that the atrocities committed by Daesh against the Yazidis of Sinjar constitute genocide.

In May and June 2016, Canada submitted correspondence to the UN Security Council calling for the Council to establish a mechanism to investigate reports of violations of international law by Daesh in Iraq and Syria, including allegations of genocide and other serious international crimes, and to identify measures to ensure that perpetrators of these crimes are held to account, including through a referral to the International Criminal Court as appropriate.

Holding Daesh accountable for the atrocities it continues to perpetrate is a priority for the Government of Canada, and Canada has been at the forefront of international action on this important issue. In September 2016, the former

Minister of Foreign Affairs participated in the launch of a UK-led global campaign to bring Daesh to justice on the margins of the UN General Assembly. The event brought together foreign ministers, UN commissioners, survivors of Daesh violence, and non-governmental organisations, drawing international attention to the issue while demonstrating collective solidarity with survivors. Canada further supported the campaign by co-hosting a panel discussion on the same issue in New York in March 2017. The campaign was launched in close cooperation with the Government of Iraq, and in late March 2017, the Prime Minister of Iraq called on the UN Security Council to pass a resolution to prosecute crimes against civilians committed by Daesh.

Also recognizing that women and girls have been specifically targeted by Daesh's violence, Canada's programming in Iraq and the region incorporates a focus on sexual and gender-based violence, and on the needs of victims.

On the ground in Iraq, Canada's diplomatic mission serves as the Gender Focal Point for the Counter-Daesh Coalition's Stabilization Working Group. As such, Canadian diplomats help other members of the coalition ensure they take into consideration the particular needs and roles of women, girls and boys when supporting stabilization activities in Iraq. Canada's stabilization programming is supporting the Commission for International Justice and Accountability (CIJA) to investigate violations of international humanitarian and criminal law in Iraq, including sexual and gender-based crimes, in order to prepare case files that can be used for future prosecution. In particular, CIJA has collected a body of evidence on the enslavement of thousands of Yazidi women and children who were subjected to forced conversion, forced marriage, sexual slavery, rape and other acts of sexual violence. Evidence collected supports a case file alleging crimes against humanity and acts of genocide, and identifies several dozen high-level Daesh perpetrators.

Protection of the most vulnerable is also at the heart of Canada's humanitarian efforts in Iraq. As part of the current three-year strategy for the region, Canada has already allocated \$730 million in humanitarian funding, supporting a wide range of protection assistance including legal assistance, access to safe spaces, mental health services, shelter and advocacy with government authorities, to name a few. It also provides psychosocial support to women and girls who are victims of Daesh violence.

Finally, Canada is supporting UN Women, through a \$2.1-million contribution, to provide expertise and training to investigate Sexual and Gender-Based Violence crimes in the Middle East, including in Iraq.

The government remains steadfast in its commitment to seeking accountability for the many grave atrocities committed by Daesh, and will continue to work with Canada's allies to ensure that this goal is achieved.