



Factsheet

ISIL (Da'esh) crimes committed against the Turkmen community in Iraq

Launch of investigation: May 2020

SCOPE OF INVESTIGATION

The investigation focused on the crimes committed by ISIL (Da'esh) between June 2014 and December 2017 against the Turkmen community in northern Iraq.

DESCRIPTION OF VICTIM GROUP

Turkmen constitute the third largest ethnic group in Iraq, and number approximately three million. Iraqi Turkmen reside primarily in an area they refer to as "*Turkmeneli*", which stretches from the northwest of the country to its centre, covering Diyala, Erbil, Kirkuk, Nineveh and Salah al-Din governorates. About 60 per cent of Iraqi Turkmen are Sunni and 40 per cent Shi'a. Turkmen do not traditionally divide themselves along sectarian lines between Sunni and Shi'a, although sectarian identities have strengthened since 2003, and sectarian allegiances played a role in a number of crimes committed by ISIL (Da'esh).

MAIN INVESTIGATION LOCATIONS/AREAS

Taza Khurmatu, Bashir village (in Kirkuk governorate); Mosul (Rashidiya, Qara Quyen and Shamsiyat), and Tal Afar and surrounding villages (in Nineveh governorate); and Amerli town, and Brauchli, Chardagli and Qara Naz villages (in Salah al-Din governorate)

MAIN INVESTIGATIVE ACTIVITIES

As part of its work, the Investigative Team screened and/or interviewed dozens of witnesses, including victims. It also collected videos, photographs, documentary (medical) evidence and open-source information, including social media posts. The Investigative Team conducted field visits to approximately seven locations in Kirkuk, Nineveh and Salah al-Din governorates, meeting community representatives and witnesses as well as documenting the destruction of cultural heritage sites, the development of chemical weapons and violence against Turkmen women and children.

COOPERATION AND OUTREACH

The Investigative Team established contact and maintained communication with several civil society organizations, including the Turkmen Rescue Foundation and the Commission for Justice and Accountability. The Investigative Team organized several meetings with local Turkmen community representatives to gather information and apprise them of UNITAD's work.

A confidential report on ISIL (Da'esh) crimes committed against the Turkmen community was shared with the Iraqi Supreme Judicial Council in September 2024.



OVERVIEW OF FACTUAL FINDINGS

Starting in mid-June 2014, ISIL (Da'esh) specifically targeted Shi'a Turkmen communities in Kirkuk, Nineveh and Salah al-Din governorates, including by displacing and killing Shi'a Turkmen civilians and former members of the security forces, destroying civilian objects and imposing severe conditions on the Sunni Turkmen who did not flee.

In Kirkuk governorate, on 17 June 2014, ISIL (Da'esh) members attacked the Shi'a Turkmen community in Bashir village. This attack may have resulted in the mass displacement of the community, the killing or abduction of dozens of Turkmen civilians defending the village and the destruction of civilian objects, including religious sites and homes. ISIL (Da'esh) subsequently launched attacks using chemical weapons on the neighbouring Shi'a Turkmen majority community of Taza Khurmatu.

In Nineveh governorate, in mid-June 2014, ISIL (Da'esh) members attacked the mixed Sunni-Shi'a community of Tal Afar city. This attack may have resulted in the mass displacement of more than 200,000 civilians and in the killing or abduction of between 500 and 1,200 Turkmen civilians, mainly at checkpoints established by ISIL (Da'esh) to deliberately capture Shi'a men and members of the security forces. Shi'a Turkmen girls from Tal Afar were captured and forcibly married to ISIL (Da'esh) fighters. The attack further resulted in the destruction of civilian objects, including most notably the Tal Afar citadel, and the imposition of harsh conditions of life enforced by violence and terror. Outside of Tal Afar city, ISIL (Da'esh) attacked the small Shi'a Turkmen village in Sacha'a, where the entire community was displaced and each adult man in the village was abducted and presumably killed. In greater Mosul, ISIL (Da'esh) forces attacked Shi'a Turkmen communities in Qara Quyen and Shamsiyat, abducting and presumably killing members of the community.

In Salah al-Din governorate, on 17 June 2014, ISIL (Da'esh) members attacked the Shi'a Turkmen communities in Brauchli, Chardagli and Qara Naz. It then besieged Amerli town for 76 days. The attack on Brauchli, Chardagli and Qara Naz may have resulted in the mass displacement of each community, the killing or abduction of dozens of Turkmen civilians and the destruction of civilian objects, including religious sites and homes. During the siege of Amerli town, ISIL (Da'esh) forces may have launched continuous attacks, deliberately targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure, and potentially killing dozens of residents.

OVERVIEW OF PRELIMINARY LEGAL FINDINGS

The Investigative Team found that there were reasonable grounds to believe that the use of chemical weapons in Taza Khurmatu and other analyzed crimes committed against Shi'a Turkmen were undertaken with **genocidal intent** towards Shi'a Turkmen as a protected group, in terms of killing and/or causing serious physical and mental injuries to members of that group. To reach a finding that there are reasonable grounds to believe that these acts may amount to genocide, other instances of ISIL (Da'esh) killings against Shi'as, within the territory controlled by the armed group and in the context of an ISIL (Da'esh) genocidal policy towards the Shi'as of Iraq, must be corroborated and examined together. Such instances include the massacre at the Tikrit Air Academy, the Badush Central Prison massacre, crimes committed against Shi'a members of the Shabak community as well as further crimes committed against Shi'a Turkmen.



The Investigative Team also found that there were reasonable grounds to believe that the ISIL (Da'esh) crimes committed against Shi'a Turkmen in the Kirkuk, Nineveh and Salah al-Din governorate may amount to:

- **war crimes**, such as: directing attacks against civilians, murder, cruel treatment, torture, use of poisonous weapons and/or use of asphyxiating gases, displacement of civilians, spreading terror amongst the civilian population, destruction of civilian property, pillage, damage and destruction of cultural property, sexual violence, forcible recruitment, enlistment and use of children into armed groups; and
- **crimes against humanity**, such as: murder, extermination, torture and other inhumane acts, forcible transfer, enforced disappearance, imprisonment, sexual violence and persecution.

RELEVANT PUBLIC DOCUMENTS

[Report on sexual violence against women and girls committed by ISIL in Iraq](#)

[Analysis of the Sexual and Gender-Based Crimes and Crimes Against or Affecting Children Committed Against the Shi'a Turkmen Community by ISIL \(Da'esh\)](#)

[Damage and destruction of cultural heritage by ISIL \(Da'esh\) in Iraq \(September 2024\)](#)