

**Ms. Taha** (*spoke in Arabic*):

I would like to thank the Spanish delegation for organizing this meeting on human trafficking and for inviting me to speak to the Council today. I would also like to thank the United

States delegation for inviting me to address the Council for the first time a year ago (see S/PV.7585). I also thank the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and its Executive Director, Mr. Yury Fedotov, for appointing me Goodwill Ambassador for the Dignity of Survivors of Human Trafficking.

When I was here in December 2015, I testified about crimes of the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS) committed against me and the Yazidi community. I told the Council about how ISIS attacked my village of Kocho, how they rounded up all the men and killed more than 700 of them in a single day, including six of my brothers. I told the Council that my mother was killed along with other older women. I also recounted that I was enslaved by ISIS for sexual slavery, along with more than 6,000 other Yazidi women and children. I spoke about my ordeal — how we were bought, sold and treated like property. I also explained how I was raped by ISIS militants multiple times per day.

Since I first sat before the Council, the ISIS genocidal campaign against Yazidis has continued. As of today, more than 3,000 Yazidis remain in captivity. More than 350,000 Yazidis, along with more than 1.5 million other refugees, continue to live under difficult conditions in the Kurdistan region of Iraq. In my own family, two of my sisters-in-law, two nieces and two nephews are still hostages of ISIS. A year ago, my beloved niece Katherine was killed in an explosion as she attempted to escape ISIS territory on foot. She was just 18-years old.

My family has tried to rescue my nephew Malik, now 13-years old. Malik has sometimes called us from captivity, and we have learned that he has been held at an ISIS training camp in Raqqa and is being trained as a child soldier. A few months ago, a rescuer was able to find Malik alone at a bakery in Raqqa. Malik refused to try to escape with the rescuer, saying that Yazidis are infidels who should convert and join ISIS. I am worried sick that he will soon be on the front lines. Another one of my nieces, Nasreen, remains in captivity. She was just 16-years old when she was kidnapped by ISIS. As we sit here having this discussion, she is probably being tortured by ISIS militants three times her age.

Three months ago, I came to the United Nations with my lawyer, Amal Clooney. We asked the Security Council to establish an independent body to investigate the crimes committed by ISIS against all Iraqis. We

have pointed out that the Iraqi Government made that request and that it was the least the Council could do in the face of ISIS' systematic atrocities. We said that the evidence was disappearing and time was running out.

There has been some progress. The United Kingdom has shown great leadership in the Security Council in proposing the establishment of an international response to the global threat posed by ISIS, including by setting up a mechanism to gather evidence of international crimes committed by ISIS in Iraq. The representatives of that country have spoken about that this year at the United Nations including just last week at an event at which the Attorney General spoke when Amal Clooney and I met with representatives of France, the United States and Russia. They were generally positive with regard to the idea of establishing such a mechanism in cooperation with the Iraqi Government. The Iraqi Government has also encouraged it, as well. Since the high-level summit of the General Assembly this fall in New York, we have discussed it in Baghdad and London. Six weeks ago, the Iraqi Minister for Foreign Affairs also committed to working with the United Kingdom to implement a United Nations- led campaign to act and preserve evidence of crimes committed by Da'esh. I would like to thank Foreign Minister Al-Jaafari and Prime Minister Al Abadi for voicing support for that initiative.

However, time is running out, and statements of support are not enough. Action needs to be taken. But I do not know what more it will take for the Council to act. I do not understand how there is no court able to prosecute the perpetrators of crimes committed against Yazidis or any independent body to investigate them. I do not understand why the bodies of my murdered mother and brothers still lie unprotected and unexamined in mass graves. I do not understand how ISIS militants can publish evidence of their crimes online and fail to be arrested. I do not know how it is that, although ISIS has no friends on the Council, the latter still does not move forward. I am not a diplomat, and my message is not political. My fight is one for all Iraqis who have suffered at the hands of ISIS. My cause is that it can never be wrong to collect evidence of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity, and that it is imperative, if we are not able to stop such crimes, that we at least commit to establishing a record of them.

Therefore, on behalf of all Iraqis who have suffered at the hands of ISIS, I call on Prime Minister Al Abadi to send a letter to the Security Council asking for the establishment of an international independent commission for Iraq to investigate and document the crimes committed by ISIS. I hope that the Council will then act swiftly to create such a commission. My fight is one for justice, and I know that justice is important to all victims of human trafficking throughout the world. Yet many survivors whom I have met feel abandoned and ignored. Minority groups see themselves as forgotten and left to become a footnote of history. Women and children in conflict areas are sacrificed instead of being protected.

The world's most powerful nations that are represented here can stop that by ensuring that human traffickers face punishment for their crimes; contributing to the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Trafficking in Persons, especially women and children, which was established by the General Assembly to provide critical assistance and support to survivors; by providing assistance to the establishment of international safe zones; and by taking in refugees who are fleeing brutal wars, as countries such as Germany, France, the United States, Canada and Australia have already done or pledged to do with regard to the Yazidis. Today, I ask members to take a first step towards ensuring justice is done for Iraqi and other victims of war, genocide and human trafficking so that, one day, I can face my abusers in a court of law and tell them what they have done, and so that other victims of war terror and those who abuse them learn that this is what the United Nations stands for and does.

We have waited long enough.