

DEHUMANIZATION AND OBJECTIFICATION IN THE YEZIDI GENOCIDE (DÎ KOMKUJIYA ÊZIDIYAN DE DEHUMANÎZASYON Û TIŞTKIRIN)

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Abstract

Article discusses the mechanisms of dehumanisation and objectification in genocide, on the example of the Yezidi religious minority persecuted by the so-called Islamic State. It uses the theoretical framework provided by such social psychologists as P. Zimbardo, N. Haslam, M. Billewicz, M. Nussbaum, Leyens et al. Sources include memoirs of the former Yezidi sex-slaves and the dehumanising narratives from previous centuries. Islamophobia is also mentioned as an example of dehumanisation of the people culturally related to the perpetrators. The analysis has proven an important role played by the both, above mentioned mechanisms in the perpetration of the crime of genocide.

Key words: Yezidi, Genocide, Dehumanization, Objectification, ISIS

Kurte

Ev nivîs mekanîzmayên dehumanîzasyon û tiştîkirina mînaka komkujiya Êzîdîyan a kêmanîya olî ya ku ji aliyê qaşo Dewleta Îslamîyê ve hatin kuştin nîqaş dike. Ev xebat çarçoveya teorîkî ya ku ji hêla psîkologên civakî yê wekî P. Zimbardo, N. Haslam, M. Billewicz, M. Nussbaum, Leyens ûwd. hatiye pêşxistin dişopîne. Di nav van çavkaniyan de bîranînên koleyên zayendî yê Êzîdîyan û vegêranên ji sedsalên berê hene. Di heman demê de Îslamofobya wekî mînakeke dehumanîzasyonê ya li hemberê mirovên ku bi sûcdaran re xwedî heman çandê ne hatiye nirxandin. Ev analîz îspat dike ku di sûca komkujiyê ya mekanîzmayên jor ên behsa wan hatî kirin de, ji hêla her du aliyan ve jî roleke girîng hatiye lîstin.

Bêjeyên Kilit: Êzîdî, Komkujî, Dehumanîzasyon, Tiştîkirin, ISIS

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1. Introduction

The following article discusses a correlation between genocide and the psychological mechanisms of dehumanisation and objectification to investigate why they form crucial factors, enabling the perpetration of mass killings and persecution. Topic is being discussed on the example of the Yezidi community – small, syncretic religious group of Kurdish origin-inhabiting mainly the areas of north-western Iraq. In the year 2014, the group fell victim of the so-called Islamic State on the basis of being followers of a “pagan” cult (Beam Amy L., 2018). Islamic State gave the Yezidis an alternative of either converting to Islam or being exterminated. During the persecutions unleashed by the Sunni extremists, many of the Yezidi men were being killed, whereas women and children became slaves (N. Murad, J. Krajewski 2017, Cavelius A., Kizilhan J. 2016, Džinan, T. Oberle, 2015, Khalaf F., Hoffmann A.C. 2016). Article, referring to the memoirs of the Yezidi women, who survived the sexual slavery, as well as the *Dabiq* magazine, discusses how the dehumanisation and objectification functions during the time of genocide. It also describes the way in which well-grounded prejudices, being the outcome of various narratives pave the way for dehumanising propaganda, and facilitate the act of genocide (Salloum S., 2016). Theoretical framework is being provided by a spectrum of the social psychology concepts of dehumanisation and objectification, including the theories of P. Zimbardo, N. Haslam, Leyens et al., M. Billewicz, M. Nussbaum and others. Last part of the article focuses on the process of dehumanisation of the perpetrators and those who share their cultural background (on the example of Islamophobia, tending to label every Muslim a terrorist).

1. Dehumanisation and Objectification in the Case of Yezidi Genocide

Genocide never occurs by coincidence; it is usually perpetrated in order to achieve political goals stemming from a certain ideology, stereotypes and frustrations widespread among the societies making it possible. Gregory Stanton, chairman of Genocide Watch defines ten stages of genocide:

1. **Classification** – present in every culture, differentiation between people according to ethnicity, race, religion or nationality. It can be viewed as a natural process, not necessarily leading to genocide.
2. **Symbolisation** – naming different groups and assigning them symbols. This process can be also view as natural, although in the time of genocide, symbols can be used for stigmatizing.
3. **Discrimination** – denial by the dominant group of the rights belonging to other groups (i.e. denial of citizenship in the case of Rohingya in Myanmar or Jews in Nazi Germany).
4. **Dehumanisation** – denying the human essence of the persecuted group.

5. **Organisation** – usually forming certain troops (secret police, paramilitaries) which will be responsible for the acts of cleansing.
6. **Polarization** – antagonizing the society by the propaganda to deepen the social divisions and direct the hate of future perpetrators towards future victims.
7. **Preparation** – of plans of the future genocide. To hide the real aim of those preparations euphemism like “antiterrorist operation”, “final solution”, or “cleansing” are being used.
8. **Persecution** – identification of the victims and separating them according to their ethnic, national or religious identity.
9. **Extermination** – gradually amounting to the scale of mass murder. Meanwhile the cultural and religious heritage is being destroyed to wipe out every trace of an exterminated group from history.
10. **Denial** – obliterating the evidence of genocide (exhumation of mass graves, cremation of bodies), intimidating witnesses, denying the fact of extermination, blaming the victims (G. Stanton, www.genocidewatch.org [access: 15.03.2020]).

From above stages, the present article focuses on the **dehumanisation**. American psychologist Philip Zimbardo considers it one of the crucial issues to understand the inhumane treatment of one person by the other. It occurs when certain people are excluded from the moral category of “human being”(Zimbardo, 2018, p. 317), by the denial of the same features, thoughts, values or feelings (*Ibid.*, s. 243). This process is accompanied by the **moral disengagement**, which allows not to apply the moral standards to specific groups in a specific time. According to the psychologist Albert Bandura, following psychological mechanisms make this possible:

1. Justifying the harmful activity, by presenting oneself better than the victim, and the usage of euphemic language.
2. Minimalizing the sense of direct connection between one’s actions and its destructive effects (diffusion or relocation of personal responsibility).
3. Redefining the perception of the real harm caused by one’s actions – ignoring, distorting, denying or minimalizing it.
4. Reconstruction of the perception of victims, to consider them deserving their punishment (*Ibid.*, s. 321).

Originally, dehumanisation had been researched in the context of mass violence. For Kelman (1976), it presents the process of perception of a victim, weakening the ordinary inhibitions of using violence; victim is denied its “human identity”, excluded from the

community of emphatic interpersonal relations (N. Haslam, S. Loughan, 2014, s. 401; <http://psych.annualreviews.org> [access: 15.03.2020]). Opatow (1990) defines dehumanisation as a form of moral exclusion, placing certain people beyond the scope of moral values and justice, causing others to become indifferent to their sufferings and unjust treatment (*Ibid.*, s. 401). According to Bar Tal (1989) dehumanisation occurs as a collective, delegitimising belief about the groups' demonic or subhuman nature. Such belief – consciously or unconsciously (Billewicz M., 2012, p. 211- 216) – is born in the situation of extreme ethnic conflict, serving the rationalisation of it, as well as the justification of the violence of one group against the other, and providing the idea of supremacy (N. Haslam, S. Loughan, *op. cit.*, s. 401-402).

New approach to dehumanisation had been proposed in 2001, in Belgium, by Leyens et al. They pointed out, that people usually reserve “human dignity” for the members of their group, denying it to the others. This milder form of dehumanisation had been named **infrahumanisation**, and observed as a general tendency, not necessarily occurring within a situation of violent antagonism. It manifests itself by attributing lower level of such secondary, social emotions as nostalgia, pessimism, pride to the individuals placed outside of one's group. They are considered to share only the same level of primary emotions such as fear, anxiety, or pleasure, common both for animals and human beings (M. Drogon, M. Bilewicz, M. Kofta, 2012, p.103-105). Fear of death intensifies this process, by making people humanise their group more, whereas empathy, remorse, responsibility and egalitarian attitudes are considered to be the factors limiting it (M. Drogon, M. Bilewicz, M. Kofta, 2012, p. 107 – 108). E. Castano and R. Giser-Sorolli (2006) had proven a connection between infrahumanisation and crimes committed on others. Participants of their experiment, after being told that members of their group committed a crime, tended to dehumanise the victims by denying them secondary emotions (M. Drogon, M. Bilewicz, M. Kofta, 2012 s. 212).

Interesting, „dualist” definition of dehumanisation had been presented by Haslam (2006). He considered antinomy human being – animal, only one of the possibilities; humans can also be contrasted with items. Humans are being distinguished from animals by their cognitive abilities, civilisation and sophistication, whereas emotions, vitality and warmth differ them from items. Denying the first set of characteristics equals human beings with animals, the second – results in their objectification (N. Haslam, S. Loughan, 2014, p. 402 – 403) .

Visual war propaganda illustrates the issue of dehumanisation in a very clear way. To mobilise a society in a war effort against the enemy, one has to deprive it of any empathy towards the latter: he is being depicted as a lethal threat to the community's lifestyle, its women and children. This fear can be then very easily transformed into hate, allowing the defenders of “nation” or “faith” to eliminate all those who are perceived as threatening those values. In the propaganda, the enemy remains anonymous, described only by pejorative epithets, such as: criminal, aggressor, rapist, barbarian. Posters depict him in a shape of dangerous and disgusting animals (monstrous apes, snakes, rats or insects) (P. Zimbardo, 2018, p. 322; look also: S. Keen, *Faces of the Enemy*, Harper and Row Publishers, 1991). This **isolation of affect** (emotional separation from the object of dehumanisation) (P. Zimbardo, 2018, p. 244), is even more crucial for the perpetration of genocide. Neurological

research had proven that presenting subjects as immoral strengthens the reaction of disgust towards them (M. Drogon, M. Bilewicz, M. Kofta, 2012, p. 233 and 235). Also visible is the tendency of humanising those who are similar to us (M. Drogon, M. Bilewicz, M. Kofta, 2012, p. 231- 232). Lack of knowledge about an object, as well as moral contempt directed towards it are therefore some of the main factors facilitating the process of dehumanization (M. Drogon, M. Bilewicz, M. Kofta, 2012, p. 235, 239 and 261), whereas empathy and the ability to discover similarities in emotions and internal life, are the ones which diminish it (M. Drogon, M. Bilewicz, M. Kofta, 2012, p. p. 233, 234 and 248). Neuro – visualization shows that during dehumanization, areas of the brain responsible for the perception of persons are less active, comparing to those which regulate feelings of disgust and vigilance (M. Drogon, M. Bilewicz, M. Kofta, 2012, p. 229 and 254). Propaganda presenting the dehumanized as alien and immoral stimulates these feelings inventively. The extent to which language determines our consciousness and attitude towards other human beings had been proven, by an experiment, in which three groups of “supervisors” were asked to imply electric shocks (being in fact only a simulation) as a punishment for giving a wrong answer in a test. Each group of the “supervised” had been described by the organisers using different language: one by neutral, second by positive, third by dehumanising. Experiment had shown higher level of cruelty towards the members of the third group (P. Zimbardo, 2018, p. 318-320).

Dehumanisation of the Yezidi community is visible in the narratives of both the western orientalist and Muslim writers; interests of both groups differed, yet both of them created its false picture. Yezidis - for many centuries remaining mostly illiterate – did not join this discourse (A. Rodziewicz, 2018, p. 260), while their exclusivism facilitated the creation of incredible stories about them, just like in the case of early Christians, or medieval heretic movements.

Western scholars wrote mainly with an intention to present themselves as brave adventurers, who discovered “mysterious Orient” with its ancient, bizarre religions. This approach had been harshly criticized by French orientalist Thomas Bois (1900 – 1971), who pointed out his colleagues’ quest for sensation, not truth. According to him, their information had been imprecise, or even fabricated. He quotes such absurdities about the Yezidis as: their bisexualism; hair covering the bodies of their women; a temple of Satan in Mosul, guarded by a sacred serpent; other temples on Mount Sinjar, in which the dog-headed creatures were jumping over the tombs of sacred cats. According to T. Bois, those scholars: “often write what they have heard from villagers, whether Christians or Muslims, whom they have met, and who do not know well these good people” (S. Salloum, 2016, p. 37-38, <https://www.academia.edu>; [access: 16.01.2016]).

Books by British scholars include information about suspicious Yezidi rituals, during which cannibalism is being practiced. W. A. Wigram and E.T.A. Wigram call them “devil worshippers” directly, describing the Lalish sanctuary as a Satanist shrine (S. Salloum, 2016, p. 36). According to John Usher during one night of the year they were to practice orgies. William Heud describes Yezidis pilgrimaging to the mountain located near the tomb of Sheikh Adi to offer certain sum of money to the devil; during this pilgrimage they were to perform an insane dance. Lady E.S. Drower, a researcher of both the Yezidism and Mandeism admitted after eighteen years which passed since the publishing of her first book about the

former, that most of the information provided in it had merely been a repetition of the stories circulating among the Yezidis' neighbours (S. Salloum, 2016, p. 37).

Certain idea about the „Yezidi stereotype” existing in the consciousness of the Muslim Kurds is provided by the collection of the folklore stories from the Turkish Kurdistan compiled in the 19th century by the Russian diplomat of Polish origin August Kościesza – Żaba and Kurdish mullah Mahmud Bayazîdî. In the introductory remarks on „certain tribes of Kurdistan”, Kościesza- Żaba himself describes Yezidis as devil worshippers (J. Bocheńska, 2018, p. 2 and 12). Among the collected stories, two testify to the black legend of the Yezidi community. Title character of the first one, Mîrza Reşo is a vicious, ruthless Yezidi brigand (J. Bocheńska, 2018, p. 29-31). The second, titled “Mehmedî Qulpî”, tells a story of a mullah, who falls a victim of the Yezidi robbers. Their chief, belonging to the *pîr* caste, tries to force him by death threats to abandon Islam and accept the faith in the Peacock Angel. Threats are being accompanied by mocking of prophet Muhammad (J. Bocheńska, 2018., p. 38 – 39). This tale testifies to the irrationality of the gossips circulating among the Muslim community; due to its strict endogamy, Yezidism never had been a proselyte religion.

Muslim writers often supported those who willed to perform authority over the Yezidis and whose campaigns required justification. Persian historian Shahrastani (died 1153), describes Yezidis as a faction of Charijities (radical Islamic sect established after the death of prophet Muhammad), founded by Yezid ibn Unais, who rejected Islam and resorted to practising the religion of the Sabeans (often identified with Mandeans). In this way he suggested, that they are the apostates from orthodox Islam (A. Rodziewicz, 2018, p. 261). Ottoman traveller Evliya Çelebi (born 1611) wrote that Yezidis perceive black dog their sacred animal: they were to live and sleep together with it and their new-borns were to drink the milk of a black bitch. In this way he repeated the story of the Yezidis worshipping the devil in the form of a black dog (A. Rodziewicz, 2018, p. 262). Kurdish prince of Bitlis, Şerefxanê Bedlîsî, confronts in his *Şerefname*, „abominable”, Yezidis, practicing „inappropriate customs” and false teachings, with those Kurdish tribes, which walk the righteous path of „*sunnah* and *ummah*” (A. Rodziewicz, 2018, p. 264).

Ottoman authorities attempting to subdue the Yezidis, legitimized this policy by *fatwas* issued by the Muslim clergy. The most famous had been written by Ahmed ibn Mustafa Abu al- Imadi (died *circa* 1571), a grand mufti of sultan Suleyman I (1520 – 1566). He accuses Yezidis of being hostile towards Islam, profaning its holy scriptures, denying Quran, assaulting Muslim scholars. They were to give superiority to Lalish over Ka’ba, worship a “cursed Satan” as the “Peacock of Angels”, consider their prophet Sheikh Adi “a partner in the glory of God”, and practice outrageous customs such as: incest, adultery, the right of sheikhs to perform sexual intercourse with other men’s wives. For grand mufti they were “more infidel than other infidels”. Their men should be slaughtered, their women and children enslaved. Fatwa described those actions not only justified under the sharia law, but even as a religious obligation. Those who died in the war against the Yezidis were granted a status of a martyr (A. Rodziewicz, 2018, p. 262 – 263, S. Salloum, 2016., p.73). Grand mufti’s fatwa inspired the subsequent, similar documents (S. Salloum, 2016, p. 74).

Under the rule of sultan Abdul Hamid II (1876 – 1892) attempts to convert Yezidis to Islam intensified, leading very often to massacres. In the censuses they had been classified as

Muslims, in the official documents named apostates (A. Rodziewicz, 2018, p. 265). Perception of the Yezidis as the traitors of Islam, had been repeated by the 20th century Arabic writers. Ahmad Taymour Pasha from Egypt described them in his book *Êzidîs and the Origin of their Creed* as a Sufi sect which in time separated definitely from Islam (S. Salloum, 2016, p. 40). Iraqi historian Abudrazzaq Hassani in his work *Êzidîs or Satanists*, published originally in 1929 claimed that Yezidi cult of Iblis is rooted in Manicheism and suggested connections of the sect with Zoroastrianism. In his further publication, *Êzidîs in their Present and Past*, he adopted Taymour Pasha's point of view supporting the thesis of their sufi origins. According to it, Yezidis considered caliph Yazid I ibn Mu'awijja a rightful imam; this belief led them finally to separation from other Muslims (S. Salloum, 2016, p. 39-40). Sadiyya Dawloujji in his study published in 1949 called upon Yezidi leaders to reunite with Islam, expressing a wish, that one day their cult be abolished by the state authorities. He considered it backward – shrines and temples should be demolished, clergy become ordinary men. Yezidis should pilgrimage to Mecca rather than Lalish. Dawloujji's book described Yezidis worshipping Satan and deifying caliph Yazid ibn Mu'awijja. It suggested that in fact they are a political movement aiming to restore the power of Omayyad dynasty (S. Salloum, 2016, p. 40-41).

Yezidi genocide women survivors testify to numerous prejudices held against them by the Muslim neighbours. Although the relations between the two communities were attempted to be kept cordial, sometimes Muslims invited by the Yezidis refused to eat their meals on the basis that they were impure (N. Murad, J. Krajewski, 2018, p. 15-16; F. Khalaf, 2016, p. 14). Ritual refraining from ablutions on Wednesday, considered Yezidi sacred day, gave way to rumours of general lack of hygiene (N. Murad, J. Krajewski, 2018, p. 46). Shirin remembers her conversations with Muslim schoolmates, who accused her of solar cult and the lack of temples. She claimed, that if she does not pray five times a day, she will not enter paradise. They teased her asking to say the word "Satan", which among the Yezidis constitutes one of the gravest taboos (A. Cavellius, J. Kizilhan, 2017, p. 56). The honorary killing of Dua Khalil, stoned by her family for dating a Muslim man provided material for anti-Yezidi propaganda. The community had been labelled barbaric in the mass media, although such situations are widespread around the Middle East, also in Christian and Muslims communities. Condemnation of this crime by the Yezidi community paid no role, whereas Sunni extremists took revenge killing 23 Yezidi passengers of a bus, and performing two bomb attacks in the towns of Siba Sheykh Khider (arab. Al.-Khantaniyya) and Tel Eyzer (arab. Al-Jazirah), where 800 people have died and over one thousand got wounded (N. Murad, J. Krajewski, 2018, p. 69-73). Both Nadia Murad and Jinan point out a lack of any information about the Yezidis in their history books (N. Murad, J. Krajewski, 2018, p. 49-50; Džinan, T. Oberle, 2016, p. 32). Nadia Murad makes a following remark:

I later thought that those books must be one reason why our neighbors joined ISIS or did nothing while the terrorists attacked Yazidis. No one who had been through an Iraqi school would think that we deserved to have our religion protected, or that there was anything bad or even strange about endless war (N. Murad, J. Krajewski, 2017., p. 30-31).

After invading Sinjar, Islamic State had been justifying its genocidal policy against the Yezidis in their English language propaganda magazine *Dabiq* (Issue 4 -*The Failed Crusade*).

Article titled *The Revival of Slavery before the Hour*, warned that God will hold righteous Muslims accountable for tolerating the existence of this “pagan” cult. On the Judgment Day, he will ask them why they haven’t dealt with them according to the “verse of the sword” of the *Al-Tawbeh* Surah, ordering to kill the infidels in case they will not convert to Islam. Author of the article reminded his readers that the cult of Iblis, who rebelled God by refusing to bow before Adam, stands in the centre of the Yezidi Faith. His followers claim that he is good and enlightened. This makes them worst of the infidels. To support this thesis of a satanic character, the works of the western scholars had also been recalled (*Dabiq 4: The Failed Crusade*, p. 14; according to: <https://www.ieproject.org/projects/dabiq4.pdf> [access: 4.04.2020]). Before the invasion of Sinjar, ISIS lawyers classified Yezidis as pagans (*mushrik*), whose religion combines elements of Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Sabeism and Christianity, using the „heretic” nomenclature of an „extreme Sufism” (*Dabiq 4: The Failed Crusade*, p. 14-15). Therefore, they could not enjoy the privilege of paying *jizyah*, facing only an alternative of accepting Islam or being exterminated. Their women can be taken as slaves. In conclusion author claimed that this actions are in accordance with Quran and the teachings of the prophet Muhammad, while all those questioning this interpretation guilty of apostasy from Islam (*Dabiq 4: The Failed Crusade*, p. 16).

Memoirs of the Yezidi women, who fell victim of ISIS’s sexual slavery, describe how dehumanisation and its rhetoric functioned in the time of genocide. First I will focus on the violence distinguishing the features of religious persecution, then I will discuss the issues of slavery and sexual violence. Among the epithets used by the perpetrators to describe their victims, authors of the memoirs recall such words as “heretics”, “devil worshippers”, or “infidels”, being a proof of the level of indoctrination in accordance with the extremist propaganda. ISIS militants and their sympathisers denied Yezidis (as *mushrik*) any rights, declaring that only conversion to Islam will gain them legal protection of a self-appointed caliphate. Salam, an influential Arab, who joined the Islamic State, addressed the inhabitants of a Kocho village in following words:

We came today to persuade You to accept the faith in the only, true God (...) We know You are the Satan worshippers (...) It is a grave blasphemy; no man in the world should worship Satan, Malak Taus or whatever you call him. You have to renounce this superstition and start to follow Islam. Only this way, You can save Your souls (...) In our Islamic State we do not tolerate infidels (...). We give You three days to make up Your mind, otherwise (...) we will deal with You, the way infidels should be dealt with (F. Khalaf., A.C. Hoffmann, 2014, p. 77-78) .

Another day, he assured them that if they will accept Islam, they could feel safe and remain in the village; those who wouldn’t were to be exiled. Also the future sexual slaves were assured legal protection on the condition of converting to Islam; according to ISIS’s regulations only Muslim women deserved such (F. Khalaf., A.C. Hoffmann, 2016, p. 86 and 113), infidel remaining „slaves” and „spoils of war” (F. Khalaf., A.C. Hoffmann, 2016, p. 96; A. Cavelius, J. Kizilhan, 2017, p. 92). Many jihadists’ statements show their contempt towards Yezidi religion and their belief that converting its followers to Islam is a mission ordered by God. One of the militants called upon old Yezidi woman to abandon her faith, claiming it is worth nothing.

- I heard that Your people believe in reincarnation – he continued – Who will You be in Your future life ? In the body of which pathetic creature Your soul will be reborn ? In a mouse ? Or maybe a rat ? (...). No – better: You will reborn as a bug, which I will smash with a sole of my boot ! (Džinan, T. Oberle, 2015, s. 66).

Haji Salman, oppressor of Nadia Murad described ISIS's goals towards Yezidis:

God wants us to convert You; if we fail, we can treat You the way we feel (N. Murad, J. Krajewski, 2017, p. 66) .

One of the Farida Khalaf's companions of captivity pointed out to the teachers who tried to convert her, that their actions stand in contrast with Quran, which tells that everyone has his „own religion”. She had been answered that this verse refers to „the people of the book” (*ahl al -kitab*), and is irrelevant in case of Yezidis who are not only „pagan” but even „devil worshippers (F. Khalaf., A. C. Hoffmann, 2014, p. 211).

Attempts to convert had been accompanied by torture and inhumane treatment. Jinan and her companions had been beaten, one of them threatened with electric shock, all repeated to forget about their „absurd faith” and „heretic upbringing” (Džinan, T. Oberle, 2015, p. 93 – 101). Ian Kizilhan, Yezidi psychotherapist working in Germany, remembers a case of a woman constantly making mistakes in the recitation of Quran. ISIS emir supervising her religious education punished her by killing her daughter, whom he previously locked in the tin chest. After killing the child, he said: „That is how all infidels must die!” (A. Cavelius, J. Kizilhan, 2017, p. 15) .

Extermination was to be justified by the legal status of the Yezidis under the Islamic State rule. Kocho women terrified by the execution of men, had been told that:

- We had the right to kill them, because they were infidels. Quran says: “Kill infidels”. – And enslave their women – added another [militant – W.K] – That's why from now on, you belong to us [F. Khalaf., A.C. Hoffmann, 2016., p. 88]. Your fathers enraged God (...) They were infidels and worshipped the devil. That is why, they had to be punished. They deserved nothing better than death [F. Khalaf., A.C. Hoffmann, 2016., p. 98].

Jinan remembers a film seen in captivity, portraying an execution of three (presumably Yezidi) captives and the commentary of one of the jihadists:

- This is the infidels' fate ! [Džinan, T. Oberle, 2016, p. 113].

In the opinion of the same man, Yezidi slaves did not even possess a soul. Description of a brutal flogging suffered by Farida Khalaf illustrates a complete lack of empathy towards the Yezidis:

He put me over a table and asked for an electric cable (...) He flogged my back, my blood gushing under the dress. Twenty men standing around encouraged him: „Yes, show her ! – they shouted – Show her how we deal with devil worshippers!” [F. Khalaf., A.C. Hoffmann, 2016., p. 182].

Shirin recalls a symptomatic detail from the beginning of her slavery, showing that some ISIS militants were physically disgusted with the Yezidis:

Sometime later masked men put the food in front of the door and asked small children to collect it. They did not go inside; they wanted to stay away from the “devil worshippers”. Afterwards we had to wash the dishes; they didn’t want to touch the plates we ate on (A. Cavelius, J. Kizilhan, 2017, p. 98).

Topic of dehumanisation related to sexual slavery of the Yezidi women deserves to be discussed separately, since – through its extreme character - it shows very clearly mechanisms of sexual violence and the results of objectification of women. First I would like to present several theories regarding this issues collected in an article by Jaroen Vaes, Stephen Laughan i Elisa Puvia. They notice that in the course of social interactions (professional work, partnership), objectifying others is to some extent natural. Moral problem begins, when such objectification violates the feelings and free will of others (J. Vaes, S. Laughan, E. Puvia, 2014, s. 186).

Martha Nussbaum proposed 7 aspects of **objectifying** another person, causing its treatment not as a „being”, but a „thing”:

1. **Instrumentality** - causing subject to be treated as a tool for the needs of the one who objectifies.
2. **Ownership/ 3. Fungibility** – objectified subject is perceived as something which can be possessed, exchanged or traded.
4. **Violability** – stemming from the lack of integrity, allowing for hurting or even destroying the objectified.
5. **Denial of autonomy/ 6. Subjectivity** – stripping the objectified off his free will and personal experience.
7. **Inertness** – depriving of ability to act (Nussbaum, M.C. 1999, p. 187).

Kaufmann suggested 3 conditions of proper objectification:

1. Previous interaction with a needed person.
2. Our aim should be morally irrelevant towards the objectified person and should not be directed at her.
3. One must be sure that objectified person is able to contribute to fulfil that aim.

Moral boundary of our actions is marked by the **dignity** of another person preventing us from treating her only as a tool. Permission of that person changes the human-tool relation into a cooperation of two subjects (Nussbaum, M.C. 1999, p. 187-188). Nevertheless, as J. Bocheńska pointed out, modern understanding of dignity differs from a traditional one. In Europe, at least since the Enlightenment, dignity is perceived as an inherent and inalienable right (J. Bocheńska, (2), 2018, p. 38-39), whereas in the Middle Eastern societies it is mostly conditioned by the desirable behaviour of an individual (J. Bocheńska, (2), 2018, s. 41).

Objectification usually leads to perceiving another person only through the perspective of her utility to achieve certain goals, not necessarily relevant or useful for her. Her picture is being fragmented into useful and non-useful elements, since she is perceived not through her human identity, but her possibilities to fulfil our needs (J. Vaes, S. Laughan, E. Puvia, 2014, p.188).

Erotic objectification is based on perceiving another person merely as a tool of satisfying one's sexual instinct. According to a definition proposed by Fredrickson and Roberts, relating to female gender, in the process of sexual objectification „a woman's body, body parts or sexual functions are separated out from her person, reduced to the status of mere instruments, or regarded as if they were capable of representing her". In its course woman becomes only a body intended for usage (J. Vaes, S. Laughan, E. Puvia, 2014, p. 190). This definition fits into feminist trend, proclaiming that such objectification is experienced mainly by women and is born in the conditions of a culture, socialising women and men in an asymmetric way, teaching submission the former, and domination the latter. According to this concept, during such upbringing women usually pass through an auto-objectification, and tend to think about themselves as sexual objects (J. Vaes, S. Laughan, E. Puvia, 2014, p. 189-190). Not going into polemic with this theory, it is enough to say, that sex is very often treated as a commodity (e.g. in pornography), which is accompanied by grave violations of human dignity. Experiments made by Longhan had proven that sexually objectified people had been perceived as less vulnerable to pain. During one of them participants had been presented with photos of women - victims of rape. Some of those photos had an "objectified" character, some hadn't. It had been proven that in the case of the first group of images, moral care had not been taken into account, there had been even a conviction that the victims suffered less (J. Vaes, S. Laughan, E. Puvia, 2014, p. 197).

Mechanism defined by Martha Nausbaum as well as the concepts of Friedrickson and Roberts can be related to the sexual slavery suffered by the Yezidi women as an effect of a genocidal campaign unleashed by the Islamic State. Their slavery had been justified by the laws issued by the lawyers of the new „caliphate". In December 2014 they issued a guide on the treatment of female slaves. Its aim was to explain to the militants which actions are in accordance with the sharia law and which stand in contrast with it. It contains a definition of a female slave (**al-sabi**): an infidel woman from *ahl al-harb* (people of war) against which fighters of a caliphate wage a war, which can, for this reason, become a „spoil of war". It had been permissible to perform sexual intercourse with her: if she had been a virgin – even right after capturing her; if not – her womb needed prior "purification". Slaves could be bought, sold, given as presents, only limitations being: the interest of an *ummah*, and a situation when a captured woman was becoming a mother. Document allowed for sexual intercourse with a slave, who did not reach puberty, if she had been "suitable" for that; lack of such qualification did not preclude "enjoying her" without "having an intercourse". Slaves could have been beaten to discipline them, this mean however should not cause injuries, be used as a form of torture, or to reach pleasure. Hitting on face was forbidden. In the case of an escape attempt, a caught slave could be punished in a way deterring the others (Mah –Rukh Ali, 2015, p.19-20 , A. Cavalius, J. Kizilhan, 2016, p. 192-1950). According to the above cited magazine *Dabiq* sexual slavery was a remedy for those militants who could not afford marriage (*Dabiq 4: The Failed Crusade*, p. 17).

This document presents an example of the extreme objectification of another person, turned into an object of law. It is worth mentioning that some of its rules had been violated

(e.g. tortures). One of the most terrifying situations experienced by Nadia Murad was a moment in which she had realised that in the eyes of the kidnappers she is just a moveable good. When she complained about a harsh harassment by one of the ISIS fighters, she heard that, together with her companions, she is only a *sabaya* (slave) and is obliged to do everything ISIS orders her.

-We were no longer human beings – she comments on this situation – we were *sabaya* (N. Murad, J. Krajewski, 2017, p. 122-123).

This expression, together with others, such as „a spoil of war”, used in the presence of the kidnapped in the third person, grounded their sentiment of objectification. Moment of selling is also remembered as degrading; extremists commented in a vulgar way the valours of traded women, bargaining with the sellers (N. Murad, J. Krajewski, 2018, p. 181). Nadia Murad recalls a moment, when her new „owner” received an act of ownership of her from a judge (N. Murad, J. Krajewski, 2018, p. 199-201), whereas Shirin remembers being given as a „present” (A. Cavelius, J. Kizilhan, 2016, p. 160). Attitude of the kidnappers towards the health of the captured women, illustrates clearly their lack of empathy and the instrumental way in which they treated their “slaves”. Nadia Murad had been raped despite of being seriously ill, while Farida Khalaf recounts a characteristic episode related to the Azeri fighter, who bought her, while she had been recovering after a severe flogging, described earlier:

Doctor examined me very thoroughly, focusing mainly on my back, pelvis, legs and wounds on my head (...) He showed me his utmost concern.

- She is in a very bad condition – he said to Amjed.

- That means ?

- She needs complete peace.

- For how long ?

- She should rest for at least ten days more.

I saw Amjed making a disappointed face.

- I will now connect her the drip and give a painkiller.

But the Azeri did not listen; he had only one thing on his mind.

- Doctor, tell me: after what time is she going to be fully fit ? – he asked impatiently (F. Khalaf., A.C. Hoffmann, 2016, p. 200 – 201)

In this story, woman resembles a new, yet spoiled car, whose owner asks a mechanic when will he be able to seat behind the wheel. In the eyes of some, women had a very low place in the hierarchy of things as well: Nadia remembers a guard, who – before raping her – took off his glasses and put them with great care on the table (N. Murad, J. Krajewski, 2017, p. 231).

Inhumane sexual treatment often led to inertness and the feeling of losing one’s humanness. Shirin describes these feelings in this way:

I lied, helpless, on the floor. This constant tension was unbearable. I could not hold my fear anymore. I started to cry spasmodically (A. Cavelius, J. Kizilhan, 2017, p. 239).

Rape had been a method of dealing with girls and women by the so called Islamic State. In this way I became conscious about sexuality, pregnancy and giving birth. I feel so dirty. So terribly dirty. I wonder if I am still the old Shirin ? (A. Cavelius, J. Kizilhan, 2017, p. 251

Nadia Murad also remembers the feeling helplessness dominating her time of slavery (N. Murad, J. Krajewski, 2018., p. 394). This fact hampers the realisation of the life goals set by the victims of rape, before they had been affected by enthrallment. Farida Khalaf declares in her memoirs a strong will of becoming a maths teacher, to prove that she is stronger than her oppressors, who tried to degrade her and other girls to the status of things (F. Khalaf., A.C. Hoffmann, 2016, p. 300). On the contrary Shirin, who dreamt about becoming a lawyer, admits that traumatic memories occupy her mind, making education more difficult (A. Cavelius, J. Kizilhan, 2017, p. 10) .

One can also ask a question about the pornography's contribution to the dehumanisation of the Yezidi women. Putting woman's body out of the personal context, it forms a model example of sexual objectification. American sociologist Gail Dines describes it as a documented sexual violence, conditioning men to the brutal treatment of women (Polish Catholic monthly journal *W drodze* 9/2015 (505), p. 8 -19. Dines discusses negative social impacts of pornography in her book titled *Pornland: How Porn Has Hijacked Our Sexuality*, Beacon Press, 2011). According to American counter-intelligence general Michael Flynn, pornography formed 80% of the content of the ISIS computers captured by US Army (Melanie Ehrenkranz, 2016, <https://www.businessinsider.com/> [access: 1.04. 2020]). Although ideology remains the main source of the dehumanisation of the Yezidi women, analysing the impact of pornography could shed a new light on the criminogenic role of visual erotic materials (Anna Krawulska-Ptaszyńska, 1999).

Another issue worth discussing in the context of genocide is a dehumanisation of people culturally or religiously associated with the perpetrators. Media coverage on the war in the Middle East, focused on the crimes committed by the extremist groups in the name of Islam may lead to the *pars pro toto* error, stigmatising every Muslim as „ a terrorist”. Putting this equality sign facilitated war crimes committed by the functionaries of international coalition during the occupation of Iraq. One of the veterans described this process in his conversation with Philip Zimbardo:

You just try to forget they are human beings, and You try to perceive them as enemies. We call them **haji**, don't You know ? You do everything, which facilitates killing and torturing them (P. Zimbardo, 2018, p. 318).

Appropriate indoctrination allowed for cruel tortures in the Abu Ghraib prison (P. Zimbardo, 2018, p. 333 – 372).

In 2001, the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia made a research in the countries of European Union to evaluate the level of anti-Islamic sentiments and actions, which could have risen after the 9/11 attacks (Summary Report on Islamophobia in EU after 11 September 2001 on behalf of the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, p. 12, <https://fra.europa.eu/>, [access: 6.04.2020]). Research continued till the end of a year

proved a rise of such occurrences. Attacks on Muslim communities usually took verbal form (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Luxemburg, Netherlands, Sweden), although sometimes hijabs had been torn off (Belgium). In some countries acts of vandalism directed against mosques, Muslim enterprises and school had been notified, from graffiti to arsons and bomb attacks (Denmark, Italy, Netherlands, Spain). In many of these countries, such actions occurred as an intensification of anti-Muslim attitudes present there already, especially among the far right communities (Belgium, Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden) (Ibid., p. 13-28). Criminogenic role of a „Muslim terrorist” stereotype can be observed in Poland as well. On the 10th of May 2016, two men attacked a Russian citizen of Chechen origin; one tried to tear off her hijab, she had been also called „a terrorist” (M. Kornak, A. Tatar, 2016, p. 14, za: <https://www.nigdywiecej.org/> [access: 6.04.2020]). Rhetoric of Polish far-right movement unequivocally identifies Islam with terrorism (M. Kornak, A. Tatar, 2016, p. 8). Justyna Helcyk, related to the Polish National Movement, during an anti-immigrant manifestation described newcomers from the Middle East as „murderers, Islamists, fundamentalists”, who „will not assimilate”, but „spread terror, rape, and murder” instead (M. Kornak, A. Tatar, 2016, p. 10). Her argumentation bears the characteristic of social essentialism, attributing steady characteristics to certain groups, which - according to this theory - cannot be alienated, since they form an essence of a group shared by all its members (M. Drogon, M. Bilewicz, M. Kofta ed., 2012, p. 49 i 55). Word **essence** comes from the latin verb *esse* (*to be*), and is a term deriving from the Platonic philosophy, used to describe those features which form a certain object, deciding about its nature. Losing any of them results in the cease of the object’s existence (M. Drogon, M. Bilewicz, M. Kofta ed., 2012, p. 46). Racism presents an excellent example of essentialist thinking since it decides on one’s characteristic only on the basis of being a representative of a certain race, which “**by nature**” possesses certain set of features. Islamophobia presents similar approach defining Muslim community mainly by its liability to radicalize and breed terrorists threatening Western Civilization. Label “terrorist”, based on stereotyping (repeating an *a priori* opinion not verified by experience) is used to trigger and enforce this stigmatizing perception (M. Drogon, M. Bilewicz, M. Kofta ed., 2012, p. 47, 49-50). Not neglecting the peril of jihadism infiltrating Europe using opportunities provided by a migration crisis, one must also pay attention to the dangers stemming from such simplifications. They victimize people who despite of following Islam, have no connections with jihadi movements, but can become liable to radical propaganda experiencing persecution. According to the research carried out by Holtz, Wagner and Sartania, after the ban of raising up minarets issued by Switzerland in 2009, majority of Muslims living in this country reacted nervously to this act of discrimination, whereas radical Islamic movements only strengthened their views (M. Drogon, M. Bilewicz, M. Kofta ed., 2012, p. 59).

Denial of „Muslim – terrorist” stereotype can be found even in the above quoted memoirs of the Yezidi women. Sunni family helped Nadia Murad to escape from Mosul, member of it pretending to be her husband; he risked his life and the lives of his relatives (N. Murad, 2018 p. 267 – 335). Similar scenario ended the enslavement of Shirin; she had been rescued by her former teacher, who first joined ISIS, but finally engaged in helping the Yezidi sex slaves (A.

Cavelius, J. Kizilhan, 2017, p. 265). He transferred her to one of the militants, who arranged an escape. Living in his family's home Shirin could witness, that not all Iraqi Muslims follow the ideology of the Islamic State:

Waqas's mother could sense my anxiety. She had been circulating around me like a bird around a chick, asking in detail about my family. I gave her just an outline, nevertheless she kept on wiping tears from her cheeks.

- We are Sunni, but spiritually we are getting away from ISIS. That's why they kill us, just like the Yezidis – she said.

Her daughter confirmed it.

- We want to stay away from the actions of the militants. We love our religion, but we do not want to convert anyone by force.

They never asked me to pray with them (A. Cavelius, J. Kizilhan, 2017 p. 269).

A Syrian, Sunni family helped Farida Khalaf, although not in a fully selfless way (F. Khalaf, A.C. Hoffmann, 2016, p. 227 – 268). These testimonies, coming from the victims are of especially great value.

Conclusion

Concluding, one has to admit that dehumanisation and objectification constitute necessary conditions to perform a genocide. The former legitimises this crime in the eyes of the future perpetrators, depriving them of any empathy towards the victims, and fuels their cruelty during genocidal acts. Various psychological experiments proven to what extent language and stereotyping shapes one's perception of other human beings. This fact imposes a great moral duty on all those, who - due to their authority or held position - are able to create others' point of view, especially on journalists, politicians, but also scholars. The research on the topic of dehumanisation remains important to understand the mechanism behind the origin of genocide. Its better understanding may prove vital for prevention of genocide and hate speech, which constitutes one of the first steps of mass violence.

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