



PRESS RELEASE

Title: French ISIS member Sabri Essid convicted of genocide and crimes against humanity against Yazidis

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The in absentia trial of Sabri Essid (alias Abou Dojanah al-Faransi), a French jihadist and former high-official of the Islamic State (ISIS), concluded on 20 March 2026. The Paris Criminal Court found him guilty of genocide, crimes against humanity, and complicity in these crimes, committed against Yazidi women and their children, and sentenced him to **life imprisonment.**

Paris, 20 March 2026. For the first time, a French national has been convicted of genocide. This is also the first time that a French court has issued a judgement relating to the atrocities committed by ISIS against the Yazidi community. French ISIS member Sabri Essid was found guilty of committing, between August 2014 and throughout 2016, genocide and crimes against humanity against two Yazidi women and children in Syria. He was also convicted of complicity in these crimes for having participated in the transfer of an enslaved woman and her children in 2015.

“Nearly 12 years after the genocide began, the Paris Criminal Court’s decision is a decisive acknowledgment by French justice of the atrocities committed by ISIS against the Yazidi community. It establishes Sabri Essid’s responsibility in the crimes suffered by the survivors who testified with courage and dignity throughout the investigation and the trial”, said **Bahzad Farhan, President of Kinyat**.

“This verdict was achieved through the courage and determination of the Yazidi survivors, who attach great value to this first conviction of a French ISIS member for genocide and crimes against humanity.”, said **Clémence Bectarte, lawyer of the civil parties**.

From a legal perspective, this decision establishes two key findings: on the one hand, it formally acknowledges that the Islamic State acted pursuant to a concerted plan, demonstrating that the organisation meticulously orchestrated its persecution campaign against the Yazidis, even before the attack on Mount Sinjar in August 2014. On the other hand, the judgement establishes that Sabri Essid not only committed acts of genocide as a direct perpetrator, including serious bodily or mental harm constituting genocide, as well as acts of enslavement, imprisonment, torture, rape, persecution and other inhuman acts constituting crimes against humanity against Yazidi women and their children, but can also be considered liable as an accomplice for his participation in the transfer of a Yazidi survivor and her family from one site of enslavement to another.

In 2019, based on information provided by the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and Kinyat, along with testimonies of Yazidi survivors, French authorities identified Sabri Essid and six of his victims, leading to the opening of a judicial investigation. Five years later, in 2024, the investigating judges ordered that Sabri Essid be sent to trial before the Criminal Court. FIDH, Kinyat, the Free Yezidi Foundation (FYF), Yazda and the Ligue des

droits de l'Homme (LDH) joined the case as civil parties, alongside three Yazidi victims and their eight children.

“The decision of the Paris Criminal Court marks a crucial step in the fight against impunity for ISIS fighters, whose crimes should not only be prosecuted under terrorism charges but also as international crimes – including genocide – against civilians and ethnic and religious communities” **said Natia Navrouzov, Executive Director of Yazda.**

Sabri Essid is presumed to have died in Syria in 2018. However, given the uncertainties surrounding the circumstances and the veracity of his death, the Court decided to try him in absentia. This judgement ensures that he can be arrested and imprisoned if he were to reappear in the future. Sabri Essid would also be entitled to request a retrial.

“While these judgments are crucial, justice and accountability for crimes committed by ISIS cannot overshadow the ongoing challenges faced by the Yazidi community in Iraq, who continue to live under severe psychological stress and security threats,” **said Pari Ibrahim, Executive Director of the Free Yazidi Foundation (FYF).** *“The resurgence of ISIS in the region remains a significant danger to the community’s future”.*

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About Yazda:

Yazda is a non-governmental, non-profit organization that was established in 2014 in response to the genocide committed by the self-declared Islamic State (ISIS) against the Yazidis and other minorities in Iraq. Yazda manages a portfolio of humanitarian, justice, advocacy, and development-related projects, all of which are community and survivor-centered in terms of design and implementation. Since its inception, Yazda has been working with local and international partners to provide humanitarian, accountability, and advocacy services to vulnerable minority groups in Iraq in their post-genocide recovery. The organization has been operating in Iraq since October 2014 and has main offices in Duhok in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and a branch office in Sinjar in Nineveh Province. Yazda is registered as a non-profit organization in the United States, the United Kingdom, Iraq, Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Over the past 8 years, Yazda has grown to employ around 80 staff on average, received support from numerous donors, both institutional and individual, and has reached tens of thousands of direct and indirect beneficiaries through its programs and initiatives.