On August 3, 2014, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) attacked Sinjar, the northern region of Iraq home to the Yazidi people. ISIS perpetrated genocide against the Yazidis, making rape one of its weapons of war and women and girls its spoils. Today, there are at least 2,600 Yazidi women and children still missing.

My project analyzes ISIS’s calculated and selective use of Islam’s sacred texts to condone rape, slavery, and violent perpetration of power over Yazidi women and girls. ISIS twists Islam and uses it as a cloak of purity and righteousness to accomplish its recruitment and bureaucratic goals. In doing so, it dehumanized Yazidi women and girls and made them its slaves, commodities, brides, prostitutes, child-bearers, and prayer objects.

I. The Yazidis: A Misunderstood Minority
- Ethnoreligious minority group
- Yazidism: monotheistic, oral, no holy book
- Worship of Tawusi Melek, the “Peacock Angel”

II. The Islamic State: A Slaveholding Regime of Terror
- Even before the genocide began in 2014, ISIS utilized Sharia law to rationalize the ‘inferiority’ of the Yazidis.
- ISIS scholars convening to resolve the issue of the theological justification of the enslavement of Yazidi people (e.g., Dabiq’s “The Revival of Slavery Before the Hour”)
- ISIS’s theological rationalization of its slaveholding regime of terror and the bureaucratic particulars behind it
- Thinking about the “genealogy” of ISIS’s justifications rather than making connections between Islam and ISIS
- Publishing of didactic material and theological discussions providing slaveholding ‘justifications’ drawn from Islamic law (e.g., “Questions and Answers to Taking Captives and Slaves”)
- Massive bureaucratic apparatus encourages rape and sexual assault, sexual slavery, and forced marriage and commends them as virtuous
- Questions to consider: Do ISIS leaders and fighters really believe Islam justifies them? Or do they just want to believe in order to assuage their consciences? Why do they never flaunt sexual violence in front of the cameras (as opposed to other graphic images and videos of their crimes)?

III. The Islam of ISIS: Qur’anic ‘Justifications’ and Power Over Women
- Rape and sex as selling points for recruitment
- The connection between terrorism and sexual and domestic violence
- The violent allure of ISIS draws men from all corners of the world who embark on a journey to hostile, violent, and deadly territory. Promises of power and pleasure must overshadow the guaranteed risks and discomforts.
- An integral part of their recruitment formula: the promise of power over women as a symbol of imagined omnipotence

IV. Profession of Power: Selling Points, Recruitment, and Qur’anic Promises
-‘Genealogy’ and Bureaucracy

V. Stories of Survival: Slaves and Spoils of Genocide
- Methodology: Thorough compilation and categorization of Yazidi victims’ first-hand accounts (the majority of them gathered from the work of Father Patrick Desbois)

VI. After Slavery: Trauma and Recovery
- Survivors
- Organizations: Back to Life, Yazda, Nadia’s Initiative

- The aftermath of sexual slavery upon liberation
- The stigma of rape, slavery, religious conversion
- Children born of rape not being accepted into the Yazidi community