Wartime Sexual Violence:

The Case of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)

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Abstract

The terrorist group Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) has in the recent year received much attention in the media for using sexual violence against women and girls in Iraq. This thesis investigates why sexual violence in wartime occurs by analysing the reasons for why ISIL uses sexual violence against women and girls in Iraq. Three theories are tested on the case of ISIL: the first is related to religious doctrines, in terms of how these may result in sexual violence; the second concerns how sexual violence can be used as a weapon of war; and the third suggests that sexual violence is used to uphold notions of masculinity. The methodological approach is qualitative content analysis of seven reports containing information about ISIL as a perpetrator of sexual violence, while taking on a constructivist standpoint and utilising social structures that form identities and create expectations on behaviours. The final findings demonstrate that the sexual violence committed by ISIL can be explained as a weapon of war and has been used against the Yezidi community strategically. Yet the underlying reason for why ISIL uses sexual violence is related to their religious doctrine which is justifying and encouraging sexual violence.

Key words: Sexual Violence, ISIL, Religious Doctrines, Masculinities, Weapon of War
Words: 9,939

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1 Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to examine wartime sexual violence and why it takes place. The objective of study is the terrorist group Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), and to find reasons for why ISIL is using sexual violence against women and girls. While many acronyms for the Islamic State are used in the media and amongst academics such as ISIS (the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham); IS (the Islamic State); or Da'esh (the Arabic acronym for Al Dawla al-Islamyia fil Iraq wa'al Sham) all of these refer in some way to an Islamic State (Dearden, 2014) and ISIL (Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant) has been used by both newspapers as well as in academia. I will therefore use ISIL in this thesis when investigating the following research question: *Why is ISIL using sexual violence against women and girls in Iraq?*

Three different theories around sexual violence in wartime are tested, which are built upon: religious doctrines; deracination, humiliation and intimidation; and masculinities. ISIL as a case is interesting because it is a new perpetrator of sexual violence; therefore, published research on this is rare. Even though there has been much research on sexual violence in regard to masculinities and how sexual violence can be used as a means of deracination, humiliation and intimidation it has not until now been examined in relation to ISIL. Also, ISIL has strong convictions in their religious beliefs and follows them diligently (Kfir, 2015). Yet religious doctrines have received little attention in the discussions about wartime sexual violence and are therefore interesting to investigate as a reason for sexual violence.

1.1   Structure of Thesis

The outline of this thesis is the following: Chapter one includes an introduction with a background to the case, the purpose of this thesis and a definition of sexual violence. Chapter two contains the theoretical framework, covering discussions around wartime strategic sexual violence as well as a literature review touching upon different theories around sexual violence in war. In chapter three the methodological approach of this thesis is explained. In chapter four an analysis of seven reports from Human Rights Watch (HRW), Amnesty International (AI) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), containing evidence of sexual violence committed by ISIL is provided. Chapter five contains a conclusion where the results of the analysis are discussed and summarised. In chapter six the reference list is presented. Lastly, in chapter seven an appendix is provided containing a list of the empirical evidence with the abbreviations for the reports that will be used throughout this thesis.

1.2   Background

The 2003 invasion in Iraq led by the United States of America (US) turned Iraq into a battleground of different competing armed groups. The reason for the invasion was due to the US believing Iraq to have weapons of mass destruction. The then US President, George W Bush, gave the leader of Iraq, Saddam Hussein, 48 hours to leave Iraq or a war would break out (BBC, 2015). The Saddam regime, which lasted for decades, relied on fear to sustain itself but also on a well elaborated system of patronage (Kfir, 2015:237). During the nine year long US invasion, Saddam was captured and later executed in 2006. Simultaneously due to months of deadlock in the government Nouir al-Maliki, a Shia candidate, was asked to form a new government (BBC, 2015). While Maliki was in power from 2006-2014 much injustice against the Sunni population took place which led to an insurgency of the Sunnis, paving way for many extremists (Boghani, 2014). These

Sunni extremists found something to pursue, namely an Islamic State of Sunnistan (Kfir, 2015:240-242).

ISIL perceives itself as Sunni Muslims with a mission to shape the Islamic State. Their enemies are considered to be foreigners in general and Shi'a Muslims (Kfir, 2015:240-241). The group has been active since 2006, but only recently have they received wide attention in the media. In a report from HRW, concerns about ISIL's brutality are raised. They openly promote campaigns of killings through social media, whilst making clear that they do not adhere to the same laws and values as those shared by the international community (HRW 3). The group's behaviour of practicing slavery, crucifixion and beheadings (Wood, 2015) is spreading fear while suppressing populations under its control (HRW 3). In terms of terrorist groups, Kfir argues that both Bin Laden's Al Qaeda and Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's ISIL are groups that use key tools such as an uncompromising religious interpretation to actively encourage 'extreme acts of violence' (Kfir, 2015:242-243). The exact numbers of ISIL fighters are unknown, but estimations indicate on at least 10,000 fighters, many of them being foreign fighters who joined the group, and until now, the group rules an area larger than the United Kingdom (Kfir, 2015:237-238). The fighters have committed crimes against Christian, Shi'a and Yezidi communities such as sexual violence, murder, enslavement, deportation or forcible transfer of population, imprisonment or other severe deprivation of physical liberty (OHCHR:15).

1.3 Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate wartime sexual violence by looking at the reasons for why ISIL is using sexual violence against women and girls in Iraq. The case will be examined by discussing if these acts of sexual violence are strategic and thereby explained as a weapon of war (Eriksson and Stern, 2013), where the targeting may be more selective, or whether the targeting is more random (Cohen and Nordås, 2014; Gerecke, 2010; Kirby, 2012) but may nonetheless be explained as a weapon of war. This will be done in relation to three theories that will be applied on the case, namely: religious doctrines, in terms of

how these can result in sexual violence; deracination, humiliation and intimidation, concerning how sexual violence can be used as a weapon of war; and masculinities, which proposes that sexual violence is used to uphold notions of masculinity.

In this thesis I will take on a constructivist standpoint. Constructivism will be helpful in answering the research question as it focuses on how roles, norms, beliefs, principles and ideas create expectations on social behaviour (Price and Reus-Smith, 1998:266). Berger and Luckman state that the reality is socially constructed by people's use of communication and their agreed and shared meaning of this through language (Galbin, 2014:84). Also, constructivism emphasises how hegemonic masculinity, instead of patriarchy, accentuates different types of masculinities and the character of these such as dominance and subordination (Leatherman, 2011:17) which will be investigated in this thesis.

1.4   Definition of Sexual Violence

In conflicts, sexual violence takes different forms, such as sexual slavery, sexual torture, targeting of certain women from an ethnic group, individuals who commit sexual violence opportunistically; and in some conflicts all of the above (Wood, 2010:124). The definition of sexual violence in this thesis follows Cohen' and Nordås' definition of sexual violence which is built upon the International Criminal Court definition (2014:419) and includes: "rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, and forced sterilization/abortion". I also add forced marriage to this definition as this is a recurrent scenario in the reports. In this thesis women and girls are seen as the targets for sexual violence because in the reports from AI, HRW and OHCHR, women and girls are primarily the victims of the sexual violence committed by ISIL.

2 Theoretical Framework

This chapter contains a theoretical discussion on wartime sexual violence, consisting of a section on *strategic sexual violence during war*, followed by a *literature review* with three different theories in the centre, namely: religious doctrines; deracination, humiliation and intimidation; and masculinities. Further, many cases of sexual violence in war have been discussed by scholars extensively such as: Rwanda during the 1994 genocide where sexual violence was used as a weapon of genocide against Tutsi women and girls (Burnet, 2012:98); or the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1992 to 1995, which resulted in thousands of women and girls being victims of rape and other forms of sexual violence (HRW, 2002:1) when the Bosnian Serb forces systematically used sexual violence against Bosnian Muslim women (Wood, 2010:124); or the case of Democratic Republic of Congo, where the sexual violence has been described as the 'worst in the world' and a "systematic pattern of destruction toward the female species" (Eriksson and Stern, 2013:6). These are just some examples of wartime sexual violence.

In what way will this research contribute to the existing discussion on wartime sexual violence? First and most important, ISIL as a perpetrator of sexual violence is a very recent case and research on this to date is rare to my knowledge. At least in terms of applying the three theories mentioned: religious doctrines; deracination, humiliation and intimidation; and masculinities. Religious doctrines have received little attention in the discussion about wartime sexual violence. Instead most scholars have focused on notions of masculinity, socialisation, hierarchy and genocidal, ethnic or symbolic reasons as common causes for sexual violence in wartime (Cohen, 2013; Eriksson and Stern, 2013; Wood, 2009; Enloe, 2000; Goldstein, 2001; Leatherman, 2011). ISIL is therefore interesting because by investigating how religion plays a central role in influencing ISIL's acts of sexual violence it may open up for some alternative explanations to why wartime sexual violence occurs.

2.1   Strategic Sexual Violence during War

Wartime Sexual violence can be explained as 'collateral damage' or a 'weapon'. According to feminist research, rape in conflict is an effective tool to humiliate or intimidate people (Eriksson and Stern, 2013:19). In an interview, in the magazine *The Nation,* Margot Wallström, the former UN Special Representative of the Secretary General on sexual violence in conflict, explicates sexual violence as a weapon of war targeting women and girls but also men and boys "[...] as planned and systematic, designed to control the territory, to instil fear, to terrorise the population" (Eriksson and Stern, 2013:46). Also, in a report from HRW on Sierra Leone rape is "[...] an integral tool for achieving military objectives" (Eriksson and Stern, 2013:46). Therefore, sexual violence can be explained as a weapon of war when it is used against the 'civilian population' strategically. The strategic effect of sexual violence as a weapon of war, explained by Eriksson and Stern (2013), is: it focuses on the perpetrator and thereby re-establish militaristic masculinity; it targets the women mostly by attacking the ethnic/political/religious identity they embody which turns the focus to the victim; and it enhances the symbolic interface between the perpetrators and the victim when the perpetrator is feminising the identity of the victim thereby masculinising themselves and strengthening their identity (Eriksson and Stern, 2013:47). Strategic targeting is explained by Kirby (2012) who implies that perpetrators of sexual violence target individuals and communities mostly because of their identity and not to take their resources (Kirby, 2012:812).

Another way of explaining sexual violence during war, which is connected to 'collateral damage', may be that with war chaos follows where the breakdown of society and state reduces institutions and other safeguards for women. The social constraints on men are lessened and their individual power and access to women is increasing. The breakdown gives men opportunity to engage in sexual violence (Gerecke, 2010:140; Cohen, 2013:462). This sexual violence can perhaps be seen as a matter of opportunity with more random targeting. It may nevertheless be explained as a weapon of war in for instance some situations when

it is used for other means such as revenge where it can be seen as a way to gain self-interests (Kirby, 2012:807).

2.2   Literature Review

The research question of this thesis is: *Why is ISIL using sexual violence against women and girls in Iraq*? Much research has been conducted by various scholars on sexual violence in wartime and how rape is used as a weapon of war. Typically, these scholars have explained the behaviour of the perpetrators through theories of masculinity or other reasons such as genocide and ethnic differences, or the scholars focused on the dynamic of the armed groups in terms of: how the recruitment process may impact the extent of rapes; how rape is being used as a socialisation tool within the group; how the hierarchy in the group may determine if sexual violence will occur; and how religion can have an impact on groups' actions. In this section I will describe these different theories around wartime sexual violence and discuss whether the sexual violence is carried out strategically.

2.2.1   Religious doctrines

The first aspect that will be considered is religious doctrines because ISIL is known for their strong fundamental religious beliefs. Kfir (2015) examines Al Qaeda and ISIL when looking at the rise of social groups, and argues that religion is an extremely important tool in creating identity. This applies especially when religion is interpreted in a sect-like way as it enables individuals to disregard those not devoted to the group's cause. Therefore, when religion is interpreted in an unconventional and radical way by leaders, it tends to create identification of the 'worthy' and 'unworthy' (Kfir, 2015:235). According to Aslam (2012), there is a symbolic relationship between religion and gender, and men's egos are provisioned by religious symbolism (Aslam, 2012:73). If religion would be seen as a reason for sexual violence it would probably be the scenario where fundamental beliefs are permitting or encouraging a group to use sexual violence against women. It may result in that the sexual violence is used strategically,

depending on how the religion is interpreted and followed as this may determine how one should treat the 'unworthy' others who are not adhering to the group.

Hypothesis 1: ISIL is using sexual violence against women and girls because of their religious beliefs that permit them to do so.

2.2.2 Deracination, humiliation and intimidation

Rape of women from the enemy side can be used to destroy the very foundation of societies and inflict fear (Enloe, 2000; Goldstein, 2001). It can also be seen as a way of humiliating women as well as the enemy men by establishing with this act that they are unable to protect their women (Eriksson and Stern, 2013:21). Similarly, Hale (2010) states that it has been proven in many cases that men are raping specific groups of women within society, subsequently leaving the women, the village and an ethnic group violated. It can be seen as a means of both 'erasure and marking' of identity (Hale, 2010:106). In other words rape is both marking differences and erasing differences through a process of deracination. It is not a matter of making you just like me, but more so to erase the person that you used to be. The former person is erased and thereby marked by the perpetrator (Hale, 2010:111). Also, by forced pregnancy the perpetrator may destroy or attack the ethnic purity of the 'other' (Hale, 2010:112).

If sexual violence is used as a means of deracination, humiliation and intimidation it has a strategic function and can be seen as a weapon of war since it is used for other means (Hale, 2010:112; Maria and Stern, 2013:47; Kirby, 2012:807). The perpetrators attack a community by targeting its women who are seen as the symbol of the culture's strength, which has repercussions for the whole community (Hale, 2010:112).

Hypothesis 2: ISIL is using sexual violence as a weapon of war against their opponents through deracination, humiliation and intimidation.

2.2.3 Masculinities

Hegemonic masculinity is the ruling pattern of masculinity which is prominent in the whole society (Leatherman, 2011:20-21), and according to Connell "[...] guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women" (Connell, 1995:77). However, marginalised masculinity is especially prominent in disasters and wars when social, political and economic institutions are destroyed, leaving women and men with personal and economic losses of devastating proportions. Hyper-masculinity then offers men an alternative role to re-establish lost status. It draws on extreme forms of toughness and imposing of violence to maintain or corroborate dominance and control (Leatherman, 2011:20).

According to Goldstein, the environment around military training shapes and changes men into soldiers, often creating unrealistic expectations about masculinity on themselves and their soldier colleagues (Goldstein 2001:264ff). According to Eriksson and Stern (2013), these expressions of masculinity are built upon an identity that is doomed to fail, and feelings of failed masculinity can contribute to sexual violence as it becomes a way to re-establish lost masculinity and power (Eriksson and Stern, 2013:21). In return, these shadows of masculinity are the reason to why sexual violence becomes more evident among soldiers in wartime because they simply see it as their right to have sex accessible (Enloe, 2000:99ff; Goldstein, 2001:342ff; Eriksson and Stern, 2013:18). If the perpetrators use sexual violence as a way to live up to their expectations of masculinity it may be strategic depending on how the expectations of masculinity take expression in the group. It can result in that specific sexual violence against the enemy population is carried out (Wood, 2010:132).

Hypothesis 3: ISIL is using sexual violence against women and girls to uphold notions of masculinity.

2.2.4 Alternative explanations

According to Cohen (2013), complicity in rape acts as a bonding process; therefore in groups with more traumatic recruitment (such as kidnapping or forced conscription) it can be more necessary to bond the group together. From this observation, Cohen argues that armed groups use wartime rape as a means of socialisation and not as a weapon of war (Cohen, 2013:476). This view is less useful for this thesis since many of the ISIL fighters have voluntarily joined the group, as mentioned in section 1.2, which leaves this view disregarded in this thesis.

Moreover, Wood (2009) argues that the hierarchy within groups is central in controlling the sexual violence committed by the combatants, where a group with a strong hierarchy and that has leaders who disregard sexual violence usually results in that less sexual violence takes place (Wood, 2009:140). I have also chosen to ignore this view for now since the empirical evidence is very limited in providing enough information on the hierarchy within ISIL.

Lastly, some scholars argue that rape in wartime is more likely to occur by perpetrators who commit genocide by using rape as a central tool in their acts (Cohen, 2013:463). An example of this is the 1994 genocide in Rwanda where sexual violence was used as a weapon of genocide against Tutsi women and girls (Burnet, 2012:98). Even though there have been allegations of ISIL specifically attacking the Yezidi community, which may amount to genocide, these allegations are still under investigation (OHCHR). As of now, there is not enough information in the empirical evidence to be able to discuss this matter. Instead the three hypotheses stated earlier will be tested on the case of ISIL as a perpetrator of wartime sexual violence.

3 Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodological approach of this thesis starting with the theoretical outlook followed by a discussion about the chosen method qualitative content analysis. Even though ISIL has committed acts of sexual violence against women, girls and teenage boys (UN, 2014) this thesis will only focus on ISIL's sexual violence against women and girls because the empirical evidence provided mostly covers acts against them. Also, this research limits the geographical scope of investigation merely to Iraq, despite information that sexual violence committed by ISIL has taken place elsewhere. This choice is also based on the fact that the empirical evidence available focuses mostly on Iraq, or at least has its starting point there.

3.1 Ontology and Epistemology

In the eyes of naturalists and positivists the word is objectively observable (Bryman, 1988:41) while constructivism implies that the world is socially constructed by ideas, norms and patterns (Moses and Knutsen, 2007:165). The reasoning in this thesis proposes that ISIL's world is constituted by norms and ideas for instance religion, differences in identities and notions of masculinities. This makes constructivism suitable, as it focuses on the social construction of the world and stresses the importance of considering ideational structures where actors are driven by underlying structures such as identities whilst pursuing their interests (Mooses and Knutsen 2007:181). It recognises that agent and structure are mutually constituted; thereby clarifying the identities and meanings of people and exposes how these affect their behaviour (Price and Reus-Smit, 1998:267). According to Berger and Thomas (1966) identities are formed by social processes and stands in direct relation to the society where the social processes [...] "involved in both the formation and the maintenance of identity are determined by

the social structure" (Berger and Thomas, 1966:354). With this said, it is essential in this thesis to assume that the reality is socially constructed.

In terms of epistemology, qualitative research is committed to see through the eyes of the entity that is being studied (Bryman, 1988:69), and when doing this constructivism suggests that "[...] we must have some idea of what we are supposed to see" (Moses and Knutsen, 2007:150). In this research it is important to know what to look for, otherwise one cannot recognise the reasons that will be tested in this thesis which are built upon religion, deracination, humiliation and intimidation and notions of masculinities. By merely observing it would be difficult to understand the reasons for why ISIL is using sexual violence as the theories tested for this are socially constructed. For instance religion, which is investigated as a plausible reason for ISIL's actions, is an ideologically motivated social construction (Schilbrack, 2012:97).

Lastly, the methodological approach of this paper is that of interpretivism and social construction is what maintains social actions according to interpretivism (Halperin and Heath, 2012:42). Content analysis can be quantitative or qualitative, where quantitative content analysis is usually answering questions such as "how often" or "how many". In terms of utilising a quantitative analysis in this case, one could for instance count all the allegations of sexual violence in all regions in Iraq which would provide information about to what extent the sexual violence takes place. However, this would not be suitable for this study as it would not provide any information about why ISIL is using sexual violence. Qualitative research on the other hand seeks to go beyond description and instead provide an analysis of the environment examined (Bryman, 1988:63). Qualitative research also takes into account contextualism, meaning that for instance the environment or the group examined will be investigated as wholes. Only when behaviour and actions are placed in a wider social context we can fully understand the data that has been collected about it (Bryman, 1988:63-64). Therefore, in this thesis it is important to provide a background on the case to fully analyse the data collected.

3.2 Method

The method of this research is qualitative content analysis which is a systematic analysis of textual information. The text analysed can be anything from official documents to cultural documents (newspapers articles, magazines etc.) to personal documents (diaries, emails etc.) (Halperin and Heath, 2012:318). It is an unobtrusive method that can reduce biases and enable the researcher to gain access to documents that would be difficult to investigate by direct contact such as interviews. The various reports analysed in this thesis contain information based on hundreds of witnesses. This information would have been difficult to collect by myself through for instance interviews; therefore, by utilising this method it helps to reduce biases while accessing a large amount of information. Furthermore, qualitative content analysis is concerned with exposing the meanings and purposes embedded in the text and to detect underlying structures that are of interest to the researcher. It focuses more on the hidden content such as motives, purposes, meanings, norms and values (Halperin and Heath, 2012:319). Also, qualitative methods favours when the testing of concepts and theories are done simultaneously as the date collection (Bryman, 1988:67). Therefore, this method is suitable in answering the research question as it allows for exposing underlying meanings in the text as well as revisit the data. This flexibility is important in this research as the reasons for why ISIL uses sexual violence are not fixed and may change in the process of data collection.

The materials that will be analysed in order to test the hypotheses are seven reports from 2014 and 2015 by HRW, AI and the OHCHR, which contain information about ISIL as a perpetrator of sexual violence: four reports from HRW; two reports from AI; and one report from OHCHR (See Table 1 on page 36). The reports mostly contain collections of interviews with women and girls that ISIL used sexual violence against. Some reports also provide full documentations of the situation in Iraq and ISIL with information of the sexual violence from not only the victim's perspective, which will give me a triangulation of data. Also, these sources are generally considered to be trustworthy and reliable to collect data on human rights violations from as they

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provide annual globe coverage on these issues (Cohen and Nordås, 2014:421). When analysing these reports, the topics of interests that I will look for are: religious ideas about sexual violence; strategies of sexual violence in terms of deracination, humiliation and intimidation; and lastly, sexual violence as a way to enhance masculinity. The whole reports will be examined where certain paragraphs will be highlighted and discussed carefully. Yet there is a risk for bias when the researcher is selecting 'the right' material to be analysed (Pierce, 2008:264). The reports I will look at were difficult to find and to my knowledge there are not that many reports from these organisations yet that touches upon ISIL and sexual violence against women and girls. I have therefore not excluded any reports that I found because they have not exceeded the scope of this thesis.

The process of the content analysis will be the following: firstly, an open coding strategy is adopted where I will look at the documents, review a small sample of them and make notes about each document as well as the entire text; secondly, all the documents will be reviewed with different variables in mind and passages are tagged and patterns labelled and these will be placed under the different categories that have been created; and thirdly, I will go back and ensure that the labels and the tags are applied properly by re-checking them (Halperin and Heath, 2012:323). However, there is risk for bias in data collection on sexual violence as it is often assumed that many victims are unwilling or hindered by something to report. It could be fear of stigmatisation, fear of violence or feelings of embarrassment and shame (Cohen and Nordås, 2014:421). The women and girls who do step forward will of course raise thoughts about why they do this when others do not. In this case there has been an extensive pressure from international and national media on the women and girls as well as their relatives to step forward (AI 1:14). Concerning the choice of method, ideal methods that could have been utilised are perhaps interviews with women and girls in Iraq who ISIL committed sexual violence against. However, this would be a huge task and extremely difficult as it has been demonstrated that both AI and HRW had difficulties at first in finding women and girls that are willing to share their stories with the world (HRW 4; AI 1), notwithstanding that these organisations are very experienced in this kind of work.

4 Analysis

This chapter provides an analysis of ISIL as a perpetrator of sexual violence and the reasons for why ISIL is using sexual violence against women and girls in Iraq. Seven reports have been investigated: four reports from HWR; two reports from AI; and one report from OHCHR. The time frame of the reports analysed is September 2014-April 2015. When carrying out the qualitative content analysis three categories were created to be analysed, namely: religious doctrines; deracination, humiliation and intimidation; and masculinities. First and foremost empirical evidence of sexual violence committed by ISIL will be provided. In Appendix 1, Table 1 called 'Empirical evidence' is found, which contains all the reports analysed including their abbreviation that will be used throughout the analysis.

4.1 Evidence of Sexual Violence against Women and Girls

In the reports it is declared that ISIL's biggest target groups have so far been ethnic minorities such as Yezidi, Christian, Turkomen and Shabak (OHCHR). Precise estimations of how many women and girls who have been victims of sexual violence are difficult to find, but according to a UN statement in 2014 approximately 1,500 Yezidi and Christian persons had been victims of sexual slavery (UN, 2014). Yet the reports analysed demonstrate that the Yezidi minority in particular has been victims of brutal treatment, predominantly the women and girls as there has been clear witness statements indicating that sexual violence has taken place against them (AI 1:4; OHCHR:9). Thousands of Yezidis were abducted when ISIL took over the Sinjar region, north-west of Iraq, in August 2014 (HRW 2). When ISIL has been attacking Yezidi villages women and children are seen as 'spoils of war' by ISIL who they believe they own (OHCHR:9). Hundreds of women and girls whom managed to escape from

captivity told stories of systematic rape and other sexual violence against Yezidi women and girls (HRW 1). Many witnesses reportedly state that the women and girls, sometimes as young as 6 and 9, were subjected to sexual slavery, given as gifts or sold, forced into marriage, subjected to rape and other forms of sexual violence (AI 1; AI 2; HRW 2; OHCHR).

4.1.1 Religious doctrines

This section provides evidence of how ISIL's religious doctrine permits sexual violence including an analysis of whether religion may be a reason for why ISIL is using sexual violence against women and girls.

Hypothesis 1: ISIL is using sexual violence against women and girls because of their religious beliefs that permit them to do so.

ISIL has openly declared that they are enslaving women. For instance in the article "The revival of slavery before the hour," published in Dabiq, which is their online magazine, ISIL claims to use a custom justified under sharia (Islamic law)[1] but ISIL is using their own interpretation of it to legitimise criminal practices (AI 1:11). In its publication Dabiq, it states:

> "*Unlike the Jews and Christians, there was no room for jizyah (non-Muslim residents) payment. Also, their women could be enslaved… After capture, the Yazidi women and children were then divided according to the Sharī'ah amongst the fighters of the Islamic State who participated in the Sinjar operations, after one fifth of the slaves were transferred to the Islamic State's authority to be divided as khums [fifth]… Before Shaytān [Satan] reveals his doubts to the weak-minded and weak hearted, one should remember that enslaving the families of the kuffār [infidels] and taking their women as concubines is a firmly established aspect of the Sharī'ah…*" (AI 1:11).

Similar statements by the magazine have been detected in another report as well where it was claimed:

> "*After capture, the Yazidi women and children were then divided according to the sharia amongst the fighters of the Islamic State who*

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[1]Sharia is "the fundamental religious concept of Islam, namely its law, systematized during the 2nd and 3rd centuries of the Muslim era (8th-9th centuries)." The Islamic law is the "[…] expression of Allah's command for Muslim society and, in application, constitutes a system of duties that are incumbent upon a Muslim by virtue of his religious belief" (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2015).

participated in the Sinjar operations, after one fifth of the slaves were transferred to the Islamic State's authority to be divided as khums [a tax on war spoils]" (HRW 2).

When analysing these quotes one may argue that ISIL's religious beliefs permit and encourage them to enslave women of non-Muslim communities and it seems like they are mostly focusing on the Yezidi women and girls according to these quotes. This may be because the Yezidis are seen as 'tax of spoils' and ISIL fighters think that they own them (OHCHR:9). It is also stated that according to sharia, infidel women should be taken as concubines[2] by the fighters as well as slaves. Although other minorities have been detained by ISIL such as Christians it appears that other terms apply to them perhaps since they are considered to be 'People of the Book'[3] (OHCHR:6). For instance when ISIL seized Mosul in June 2014, Christians in the city of Mosul were ordered to convert to Islam, pay a tax (jizya), flee, or die (HRW 4). It seems to be indicated in the quotes above that the Yezidis cannot pay while the Jewish and Christians can (AI 1:11). Some mean that ISIL's religious methods are from another era (Wood, 2015; HRW 3) and the fee ISIL is referring to, has according to some, its traces in the medieval time where Christians and Jews would be fought until they pay the fee willingly (Wood, 2015).

According to Berger and Luckman the reality is socially constructed by people's use of communication and their agreed and shared meaning of this through language (Galbin, 2014:84). This social construction can be viewed in the language that ISIL's magazine is using as it creates certain expectations in terms of how the ISIL fighters should treat infidels. It may also be seen as a justification for their behaviour. This is also connected to Kfir's argument, stating that when religion is interpreted in a sect-like way it enables individuals to disregard those not committed to the group (Kfir, 2015:235).

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[2] "The state of cohabitation of a man and a woman without the full sanctions of legal marriage [...] In Roman law concubinage was the permanent cohabitation of a man and a woman outside of their existing formal marriages. The partners in such relationships and the offspring of their union did not have the same legal rights accorded married persons and their legitimate children" (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2015).
[3] "Ahl Al Kitab in Islam includes Christians, Jews and Sabea-Mandeans"(OHCHR:6).

Further, similar ideas continue to be stated from what appears to be ISIL's "Office of research and religious edicts" (AI 1:11), which is believed to have written this in a question and answer document:

> *"Unbelieving [women] who were captured and brought into the abode of Islam are permissible to us, after the imam distributes them [among us]… If she is a virgin, he [her master] can have intercourse with her immediately after taking possession of her. However, if she isn't, her uterus must be purified [first] ... It is permissible to buy, sell, or give as a gift female captives and slaves, for they are merely property, which can be disposed of... It is permissible to have intercourse with the female slave who hasn't reached puberty if she is fit for intercourse; however if she is not fit for intercourse, then it is enough to enjoy her without intercourse…"* (AI 1:11-12).

Another statement was detected in another report where it was stated by this time ISIL's "Research and Fatwa Department" (HRW 2) in a question and answer document:

> *"It is permissible to buy, sell, or give as a gift female captives and slaves, for they are merely property, which can be disposed of…. It is permissible to have intercourse with the female slave who hasn't reached puberty if she is fit for intercourse; however if she is not fit for intercourse, then it is enough to enjoy her without intercourse…. It is permissible to beat the female slave as a [form of] darb ta'deeb [disciplinary beating]"* (HRW 2).

It may be questioned whether these statements belong to religious doctrines, but the fact that they are issued by something that appears to be ISIL's religious research department or similar makes it relevant to discuss in this section. According to Kfir, religious doctrines are determining what is 'worthy' and 'unworthy', especially when these are based on a radical interpretation and a strong conviction (Kfir, 2015:235). In relation to Kfir's ideas above, ISIL's magazine can be argued to have created ideas about that the Yesidis are unworthy and sexual violence against them is encouraged since they can be taken as concubines (AI 1:11-12). Also, in the question and answer documents it is stated that the fighters are allowed to have intercourse with the female slaves, regardless of if they are virgins or not. It is even said that if the woman is not fit for intercourse she can be enjoyed without intercourse. When drawing on the previous point, sexual violence can be argued to be permitted within ISIL against non-Muslim women and girls.

Other evidence of how sexual violence has been encouraged by religious leaders was also detected in the reports. Some girls were inspected by ISIL fighters who were instructed by an 'emir'[4] to choose girls for 'marriage'. The girls would then be prepared for 'marriage' which sometimes involved full body searches. One witness remembered that an 'emir' wrote down the names of 14 girls and called the names of two girls and the ISIL fighters took the girls into another room by force. The girls were screaming from the other room and the 'emir' and the so-called 'Imam' were laughing when they heard the screams. The girls confirmed to the witness later that they had been married which in the report is referred to as rape (OHCHR:9). The fact that the religious leaders such as the 'Imam' and the 'emir' encouraged ISIL fighters to select girls to marry, including that they were laughing while the ISIL fighters raped the girls may result in that a social structure is being imposed within ISIL that permits sexual violence. This goes back to Berger and Thomas (1966) who argue that identities are formed by social processes which are determined by social structures (Berger and Thomas, 1966:354).

Further, forced religious conversion is commonly referred to in the reports and in some of the reports witnesses described the full session of it. A witness explained this:

> *"When they came to select the girls, they would pull them away. The girls would cry and faint, they would have to take them by force. They made us convert to Islam and we all had to say the Shahada [Islamic creed]. They said, 'You Yezidis are kufar [infidels], you must repeat these words after the leader'. They gathered us all in one place and made us repeat after him. After we said shahada, he said you have now been converted to our religion and our religion is the correct one. We didn't dare not say the shahada"* (HRW 2).

The fact that ISIL is forcing the Yezidis to convert to ISIL's reasoning of Islam may indicate that there might be some religious strategic plan behind the abductions since there is substantial evidence for that these religious conversions take place. It is stated that almost half of the Yezidi women and girls interviewed

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[4] Emirs are "local ISIL commanders, report to Sheikhs in the ISIL chain of command" (OHCHR:9).

by HRW said that they had been pressured by ISIL fighters to convert to Islam, which has also been confirmed by other sources (HRW 1; AI 1; OHCHR).

In addition, one may argue that the above discussions provide some evidence to support hypothesis 1, which is the following: *ISIL is using sexual violence against women and girls because of their religious beliefs that permit them to do so.* The fact that sharia is considered to be a law which ISIL refers to in relation to sexual violence by implying that it is established within sharia to enslave non-Muslim women and take them as concubines suggests that ISIL's religious doctrine permit and encourage them to use sexual violence. It can also be considered that these acts of sexual violence may not be seen in the same way by ISIL as by many other people since these acts are considered to be serious crimes in most places today. Instead, for ISIL the sexual violence may be understood as religion and considered to be 'normal', perhaps more so as a process of conversion. Hence, it seems to me that a reason for why ISIL is using sexual violence is related to their religious doctrine as it permits and encourages them to do so.

4.1.2 Deracination, humiliation and intimidation

In this section an analysis of weather ISIL is using sexual violence against women and girls as a weapon of war will be provided.
Hypothesis 2: ISIL is using sexual violence as a weapon of war against their opponents through deracination, humiliation and intimidation.

There has been some evidence of deracination in one of the reports, but this entails only two accounts of forced abortions. A 19 year old pregnant married woman from the Yezidi community said that she was raped by an ISIL 'doctor' repeatedly for two and a half months. The doctor had been sitting on her stomach, attempting to kill her unborn child whilst saying "*this baby should die because it is an infidel; I can make a Muslim baby*" (OHCHR:10). Another witness reported that when a doctor had conducted abortions on two women a ISIL fighter had been heard constantly saying "*we do not want more Yezidis to be born*" (OHCHR:10). These incidents could be an example of when rapes as well as

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abortions act as an 'erasure of identity and marker of identity' (Hale, 2010:106). Forced abortions may be seen as a way to erase a certain ethnicity. However, this scenario was only mentioned twice in the reports which makes it very difficult to estimate how widespread this is. Similarly, the type of language that is used by the 'doctor' when he is raping the Yezidi woman whilst saying that he can make a Muslim baby has only been spotted once in the reports. Yet according to Hale (2010) it can be explained as not being a matter of making the women more like him but to erase the person she used to be. She is then marked by him and the marking would be even more evident if she gave birth to his child. Also, by forced pregnancy the perpetrator may destroy or attack the ethnic purity of her (Hale, 2010:112). Rape is used here to create differences and to annihilate difference through a process of deracination (Hale, 2010:111).

Concerns have been raised by Yezidi family members of the victims, one stating that: "*losing my wife and children to ISIL is the worst nightmare that could happen to a man*" (OHCHR:10). Also, relatives of the abducted Yezidi women and girls felt distress about the future for the women and girls after being victims of sexual violence (AI 1:13; HRW 1). This is because in Yezidi customs, marriage with members of other faiths as well as having sexual relations with them before marriage is not permitted. It would be shameful for the whole family if such practices took place (AI 1:13; HRW 4). Because of feelings of stigma and shame many women and girls do not feel that they can share what happened to them with their relatives (AI 1:14). With this said, the abduction of Yezidi women and girls by ISIL can be viewed as a way to humiliate the women and girls as well as feminise the male enemy since they may be perceived to be unfit for protecting their women (Eriksson and Stern, 2013: 21). One man was stating in the report that "*losing my wife and children to ISIL is the worst nightmare that could happen to a man*" (OHCHR:10), which may be an indication of that it is some humiliation around being unable to protect your wife and children as a man.

Regarding evidence of how ISIL is intimidating their opponents there are many cases of suicide among the detained Yezidi women and girls which may be proof of how ISIL has invoked fear in the community. In the reports many said that while being in captivity they witnessed attempts of suicide to avoid sexual

violence or forced religious conversion and now several of them suffer from depression and trauma (AI 1:8). Rashida, 31, managed to speak to her brother while being in captivity and told him that she was forced to convert to Islam by the ISIL fighters and her brother told her that "*[...] he would try to help her but if he couldn't, I should commit suicide because it would be better than the alternative*" (HRW 2).

Another witness said:

> "*We were 21 girls in one room, two of them were very young, 10-12 years. One day we were given clothes that looked like dance costumes and were told to bathe and wear those clothes. Jilan killed herself in the bathroom. She cut her wrists and hanged herself. She was very beautiful. I think she knew that she was going to be taken away by a man and that is why she killed herself*" (AI 1:8).

Alike, Wafa, 27, told AI that while she and her sister were held in Mosul by an ISIL fighter they tried to kill themselves:

> "*The man who was holding us said that either we marry him and his brother or he would sell us. At night we tried to strangle ourselves with our scarves. We tied the scarves around our necks and pulled away from each other as hard as we could, until I fainted. Two girls who were held with us woke up and stopped us and then stayed awake to watch over us. When they fell asleep at 5am we tried again, and again they woke up and stopped us. I could not speak for several days after that*" (AI 1:8).

Many Yezidis have fled in fear of ISIL and in relation to this a Yezidi man who was a member of the Peshmerga[5] forces said:

> "*Yes I am a Peshmerga, but I have a wife and children who need protection, so my priority had to be to take them to safety before Da'esh attacked the area. I could not leave my family to be taken hostage or slaughtered by Da'esh; so we fled*" (AI 1:11).

Similarly, another Yezidi man said:

> "*The fear of the crimes Da'esh could commit against the women and children of my family is much greater than the fear of being killed by Da'esh*" (AI 1:11).

When drawing on the quotes above it is rather clear that ISIL (Da'esh in Arabic) has managed to instill fear in the community. Many Yezidi women and girls attempted to or did commit suicide to avoid ISIL's acts which may give some indication of what they were forced to go through. Also, many Yezidi families have fled in fear when ISIL has made their advancement, even if they were

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[5] Peschmarga are "Kurdish fighters in northern Iraq"(BBC, 2014)

Peshmergas, due to fear of what ISIL would do to their women and children. Therefore, the way ISIL uses sexual violence may be seen to have a strategic function behind it in terms of instilling fear in the community as well as humiliating their opponents. And when sexual violence is used to intimidate and humiliate the civilian population it can be seen as a weapon of war (Eriksson and Stern, 2013:46; Cohen, 2013; Hale, 2010). This also goes back to Enloe' and Goldstein's theories where rape of women from the enemy side can be a means to destroy the very foundation of societies and inflict fear in the community (Enloe, 2000; Goldstein, 2001).

Also, a local doctor in Dohuk, who was treating women and girls who escaped from ISIL, told HRW that she had examined 105 women and girls and 70 of them appeared to have been raped while being in ISIL's captivity (HRW 2). The fact that 70 women and girls out of 105 examined have been raped by ISIL in captivity may be evidence to suggest there is something more to what ISIL is doing to these women and girls than random targeting. The Yezidis have been particularly targeted as hundreds of women and girls whom managed to escape from ISIL captivity told stories of systematic rape and sexual violence against them (HRW 1). The fact that the Yezidis practice an ancient monotheistic religion, that they have been persecuted for hundreds of years, and that violent attacks against them by Sunni Arab extremists increased after the 2003 US-led invasion in Iraq (HRW 1) may have something to do with this particular targeting as well as ISIL's ideas of owning them (OHCHR:9). It may be explained by a theory implying that the perpetrators mainly target individuals and communities because of their identity (Kirby, 2012:812).

Based on the evidence above it may be argued that the second hypothesis, namely, *ISIL is using sexual violence as a weapon of war against their opponents through deracination, humiliation and intimidation,* can be verified to some extent. There is less evidence for that ISIL uses sexual violence for direct deracination in terms of abortions. However, there is much evidence for that there is some strategic reason behind ISIL's acts of sexual violence as there are many cases presented where the Yezidi community is humiliated and intimidated by the acts.

Further, the case of ISIL can be applied to Eriksson' and Stern's (2013:47) explanation of the strategic effect of sexual violence as a weapon of war: ISIL uses extreme violence and show toughness which thereby establishes masculinity; ISIL mostly target Yezidi women and girls because of the religious differences between the two groups. They attack their religious identity by forcing them to convert to ISIL's version of Islam and uses sexual violence against them, which turns the focus to the victim as many of the Yezidis suffer from depression and trauma because of this; lastly, ISIL is enhancing the symbolic interference between them and the victims by feminising the identity of the Yezidis through deracination, humiliation and intimidation, resulting in feelings of shame, fear and stigmatisation among the women and girls, whereas the men may feel like inadequate protectors. By using sexual violence ISIL is masculinising itself, resulting in that their religious identity, which permits and encourages them to carry out acts of sexual violence, is strengthened.

4.1.3 Masculinities

In this section evidence concerning different types of sexual violence committed by ISIL will be presented more thoroughly in order to find notions of masculinities in these acts whilst discussing if this is a reason for why ISIL is using sexual violence.

Hypothesis 3: ISIL is using sexual violence against women and girls to uphold notions of masculinity.

In the reports many different types of sexual violence against Yezidi women and girls are confirmed (HRW 2; HRW 3; AI 1; OHCHR). One girl, Jalila, said that while in captivity she was "owned" by seven ISIL fighters and raped on multiple occasions by four of them: "*Sometimes I was sold. Sometimes I was given as a gift. The last man was the most abusive; he used to tie my hands and legs*" (HRW 2). Another Yezidi girl shared a similar story with HRW, saying that she was selected by an older fighter who took her to his home regularly. When he locked her into his room he told his family that he was "*helping her with her*

Islamic education," but instead he raped and beat her (HRW 3). Much evidence of extreme violence is found in almost all of the reports.

One girl reported:

> *"Men came several times to take away some of the girls. Those who resisted were beaten and pulled away by the hair. Some were beaten with electrical cables. I was not afraid of the beatings, but could not bear the thought that they could attack my honour. We were constantly told that we would be forced to marry or sold to some men"* (AI 1:6).

A similar story confirmed the extreme acts of violence carried out by ISIL:

> *"From 9:30 in the morning, men would come to buy girls to rape them. I saw in front of my eyes ISIS soldiers pulling hair, beating girls, and slamming the heads of anyone who resisted. They were like animals.... Once they took the girls out, they would rape them and bring them back to exchange for new girls. The girl's ages ranged from 8 to 30 years... Only 20 girls remained in the end"* (HRW 2).

Another witness also confirms acts of violence:

> *"They were hitting us and slapping us to make us surrender,"* she said. *"As much as we could, we didn't let them touch our bodies,"* she said. *"Everything they did, they did by force"* (HRW 4).

Similarly, two sisters, Rana, 25, and Sara, 21, said they could do nothing to stop the abuse of their 16-year-old sister over numerous of months by four men:

> *"The sister was allowed to visit them and told them that the first man who raped her, whom she described as a European, also beat her, handcuffed her, gave her electric shocks, and denied her food. She told them another fighter later raped her for a month and then gave her to an Algerian for another month. The last time they saw her was when a Saudi ISIS fighter took her"* (HRW 2).

There were also many reports that stressed the issue of forced marriage; one Yezidi girl shared her experience:

> *"It was supposed to be a wedding party. They were tossing sweets at us and taking photos and videos of us. They forced us to look happy for the videos and photos. The fighters were so happy; they were firing shots in the air and shouting... There was one woman from Kocho who was very beautiful. The leader of the fighters took her for himself. They dressed her up like a bride"* (HRW 4).

In terms of masculinities in relation to sexual violence it is difficult to account for when it is notions of masculinities that make the fighters commit these acts or something else. In the reports one may indeed argue that notions of masculinity can be detected, especially hyper-masculinity which according to

Leatherman draws on extreme forms of toughness and imposing of violence to maintain or corroborate dominance and control (Leatherman, 2011:20). This can be spotted in the reports as several female witnesses claimed that the ISIL fighters were behaving extremely violent towards them as they were beaten, pulled in their hair, raped repeatedly and had their head slammed among other things (HRW 2; AI 1:6). Hegemonic masculinity can perhaps also be detected when followings Connell's definition as it guarantees "[...] the dominant position of men and the subordination of women" (Connell, 1995:77) since the ISIL fighters are forcing the women and girls to be subordinated.

It may also be argued that the ISIL fighters saw it as their right to have sex with the abducted women and girls when relating back to sub section 4.1.1 where it was demonstrated that girls were selected by an 'emir' and 'Imam' who encouraged ISIL fighters to rape them and then exchange them with other girls (OHCHR:9). According to the scholars, these types of behaviour may be explained to have its traces in masculinities, resulting in that fighters in wartime see it as their right to have sex accessible as well as a means to uphold masculinity (Enloe, 2000:99ff; Goldstein, 2001:342ff; Eriksson and Stern, 2013:18). Yet this highlights how the dominance of masculinity can be found in ISIL's religious interpretation since that behaviour is encouraged by their religious leaders. This goes back to how ISIL's interpretation of their religion creates a reality that gives meaning to them which definitely may be argued to have religious elements to it. To ISIL the Yezidis may be seen as infidels and rewards of war which is permissible to use sexual violence against as it is justified by ISIL's religious doctrine.

5 Conclusion

The research question of this thesis is: *Why is ISIL using sexual violence against women and girls in Iraq?*

Firstly, it can be argued that the reason for why ISIL is using sexual violence is related to their religious doctrine, but whether they use it as a justification or motivation for their behaviour is difficult to establish. What can be noted though is that ISIL has expressed in their online magazine that according to sharia law the non-Muslim women and girls can be enslaved and taken as concubines (AI 1:11). It is also permissible to have intercourse with non-Muslim women, and if needed one can beat them for disciplinary means (HRW 2). Evidence in the reports also pointed towards that a social structure was enforced within ISIL by their religious leaders that permits and encourages sexual violence (OHCHR:9). The latter can be seen to spur some motivation amongst ISIL fighters since they may want to live up to religious leaders' demands. On the other hand, their religious doctrine can be seen a justification for their behaviour as it has created identification of the 'worthy' and 'unworthy' (Kfir, 2015:235). Therefore, for ISIL the acts of sexual violence may be understood as a religious way of life permitted by Islamic law, a process of conversion as the many forced religious conversion of the Yezidis may indicate. The sexual violence can be explained as strategic but the underlying reason for it is primarily related to a religious understanding which permits and encourages ISIL to use sexual violence against infidel women and girls.

Secondly, ISIL's acts of sexual violence have a strategic effect and can be explained as a weapon of war in terms of targeting the Yezidi community in particular. I found that when applying the case to Eriksson' and Stern's (2013) explanation of the strategic effect of sexual violence as a weapon of war it was demonstrated that ISIL's sexual violence lead to suffering for the Yezidi community. People fled in fear and women and girls committed as well as

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attempted suicide due to fears of ISIL's actions. Many of the women and girls were also worried about stigmatisation and bringing shame to their community. Even if there was less evidence of direct deracination one may argue that the deracination, humiliation, and intimidation are connected with one and another in some way as one leads to another, especially when the sexual violence is carried out in a strategic way.

Thirdly, there was substantial evidence of attempts to uphold notions of masculinity in the reports in terms of hyper-masculinity as well as hegemonic masculinity (Leatherman, 2011; Connell, 1995). Yet the sexual violence ISIL is using is justified by their understanding of sharia law and Islam. It is expected that ISIL fighters should carry out acts of sexual violence as this kind of behaviour is promoted in their texts as well as encouraged by religious leaders. It highlights how the dominance of masculinity can be found in their religious interpretation. Therefore, the sexual violence may not be explained through notions of masculinity alone but instead by ISIL's religious doctrines and their will to uphold the acts promoted therein.

The findings in this thesis suggest that the sexual violence committed by ISIL against women and girls can be explained as a weapon of war and has a strategic function in targeting the Yesidis. And the underlying reason for this is ISIL's religious doctrine, which permits and encourages them to use sexual violence against non-Muslim women and girls. The ISIL fighters may use it as a justification as well as motivation for their tough and violent behaviour. It should be noted that even though the Yezidis have been mostly targeted for sexual violence there has been information indicating that sexual violence has been used towards other minorities such as Christians (OHCHR:15). However, these allegations have been very vague and no clear interviews with these minorities have been published in any of the reports analysed. It is therefore difficult to find reasons for why these allegations took place. These acts could perhaps also be explained by some of the findings in this thesis.

In addition, this thesis has highlighted how wartime sexual violence can take different shapes and how religion can play a central role in constructing a reality that justifies and encourages sexual violence. However, more research on

the topic is needed to get a clearer picture of why ISIL is using sexual violence. Perhaps less secondary data could be used and further interviews could be conducted as well as looking into the hierarchy within ISIL since there was some evidence of religious leaders encouraging sexual violence. It would probably also be valuable to use a positivist view in terms of mapping the sexual violence by asking questions such as 'how many women and girls have experienced sexual violence committed by ISIL' and 'where have these acts taken place and against whom'. As a result by investigating ISIL as a perpetrator of sexual violence further, more useful information about why wartime sexual violence occurs may be detected.

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7 Appendix 1

Table 1. Empirical evidence

Name of report	Organisation	Date	Methodology	Abbreviation
Escape from Hell: Torture and Sexual Slavery in Islamic State Captivity in Iraq.	Amnesty International	2014.12.23	Interviews with 42 Yezidi women and girls in northern Iraq who escaped from ISIL.	AI 1
Ethnic Cleansing on a Historic Scale: Islamic State's Systematic Targeting of Minorities in Northern Iraq.	Amnesty International	2014.09.02	Interviews with hundreds of witnesses, survivors, victims, and families of those who were abducted or killed by ISIL.	AI 2
Interview: These Yezidi Girls Escaped ISIS. Now What?	Human Rights Watch	2015.04.15	Interviews with 20 Yezidi women and girls who escaped from ISIL captivity.	HRW 1
Iraq: ISIS Escapees Describe Systematic Rape.	Human Rights Watch	2015.04.15	Conducted research in the town of Dohuk in January and February 2015, including interviews with 20 Yezidi women and girls who escaped from ISIL captivity.	HRW 2
ISIL's Reign of Terror: Confronting the Growing Humanitarian Crisis in Iraq and Syria, Testimony of Sarah Margon.	Human Rights Watch	2014.12.09	Testimony of Sarah Margon, Washington Director at HRW, from her trip to Iraq, including interviews with people who escaped from ISIL captivity.	HRW 3
Iraq: Forced Marriage, Conversion for Yezidis.	Human Rights Watch	2014.10.12	Interviews with 76 displaced Yezidis.	HRW 4
Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the human rights situation in Iraq in the light of abuses committed by the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and associated groups.	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights	2015.03.13	In-depth interviews carried out with over 100 witnesses and victims.	OHCHR