

# ISIS subjects Yazidi women to human rights violations

CHERYL WANG

Staff Writer

Systematic rape, physical abuse, sexual slavery, and forced marriage are just a few of the many war crimes carried out by the Islamic State against Yazidi girls and women.

As the Human Rights Watch (HRW) explained on April 15, female members of the religious minority group in northern Iraq have been the victims of horrifying sexual abuse and abduction by members of the Islamic State (IS).

After interviewing over 20 female abductees who escaped in the town of Dohuk, Iraq this January and February, HRW found that IS abducted thousands of Yazidi women in northern Iraq since August 2014, specifically in Nineveh province. After abduction, witnesses say that teenage girls and other women were systematically disseminated between Iraq and Syria.

The HRW especially interviewed 11 women and

nine girls who escaped since September of last year. The interviews showed that half of the women had been raped multiple times by IS fighters, and nearly all have been coerced into marriage or sold into marriage. Besides sexual assault, physical abuse is also common to force the captives into submission.

The percentage is so high that after interviewing international and local health services providers, the HRW found that at a local medical center in Dohuk of the 105 women examined by a nurse, 70 seemed to have been victims of ISIS.

One of the victims interviewed was a 12 year-old girl who told HRW that she was examined before selected by one of the IS fighters. She was beaten into submission when she resisted the men's assault. Hopeless and defenseless, she was considered the property of seven men who consistently raped her.

"I told him to take me to

my mother. I was a young girl, and I asked him, 'What do you want from me?'" she said.

"ISIS forces have committed organized rape, sexual assault, and other horrific crimes against Yazidi women and girls. Those fortunate enough to have escaped need to be treated for the unimaginable trauma they endured," Liesl Gertholtz, women's rights director at HRW, explained.

In fact, the trauma was so severe in the victims, HRW noted, that almost all of the women interviewed showed obvious signs of anxiety and stress. The captives explain that they were all separated from their families who were often killed by ISIS. Many of the girls also confessed they have tried to commit suicide or have witnessed other victims commit suicide to escape the endless assault and becoming a sex slave.

Seeing the high number of victims ISIS took into captivity as sex slaves, the gruesome treatments of the

Yazidi women, and the long-lasting trauma of the victims, the situation now boils down to one question: Why does ISIS target the Yazidi women?

Apparently, according to the Dabiq, an ISIS publication, in October 2014, ISIS confirmed its abuse and abduction of Yazidi women. However, they are justified as the girls are given to the fighters as "spoils of war". IS claims that Islam allows sexual relationships, abuse, and selling of non-Muslim women, therefore all actions that the western world proclaims as crimes against humanity, are naturally justified in Islam. This belief has thus encouraged massive systematic abuse and abduction of Yazidi women, who believe in Yazidism, an ancient Mesopotamian religion associated with Zoroastrianism.

Currently, HRW and local governments in northern Iraq are working to provide not only better health care, but more importantly more effective

health communications to the victims of IS captivity. The Kurdistan Regional Government has already started to absorb more than 637,000 displaced people from just the Nineveh province in 2014.

Unfortunately, ineffective communication between health providers and victims as well as the failure to carry out and report medical test results have made the provision of health care in northern Iraq difficult. The Kurdistan Regional Government is thus planning to improve communications as well as develop new plans to help the children born from rape pregnancies.

However, more importantly, international organizations such as the HRW and local governments are seeking ways to bridge the psychological gap in the victims and integrate them into the rhythms of daily life again by reminding them they are human beings rather than commodities sold between men.

## NCSSM Science Olympiad team goes to Nationals – first time in three years

By ADDY LIU

Features Editor

On February 7, 2015, the NCSSM Science Olympiad team took first place in Varsity and second place in Junior Varsity at the National Ready regional competition.

On April 25, 2015, they advanced to the national competition in Nebraska by placing second at the state competition. This was the NCSSM team's first time going to nationals in three years, since they placed third at states for the past two years and only the top two schools qualify to move on to nationals.

"Only two people on the team who went to nationals this year had previously been to nationals, so it was a new experience for a lot of us," said senior Rebecca Shen, one of the team captains.

Shen added that the club's

sponsors and trip chaperones, Instructors Kim Monahan, Darrell Spells, Ershela Sims, and SLI Kim Howell, were integral to the actual mechanics of getting to nationals, handling registration, transportation, and housing.

At the national competition, NCSSM placed 28<sup>th</sup> as a team. William G. Enloe High School, NCSSM's biggest competitor from North Carolina, placed 20<sup>th</sup>.

Though they did better overall as a team, Enloe only medaled in one event, while NCSSM medaled in four, by placing in the top 6 of each of those events.

The captains of NCSSM's 2014-2015 Science Olympiad team, Ashwin Ghadiyaram, Mitchell Li, Caleb Scott, and Shen, attributed the team's success this year to a number of changes they made from

previous years.

One of the most important changes they made was putting more emphasis on building events, since historically the NCSSM team's strength lies more in knowledge events.

This increased focus on improving the team's building performance was accomplished by creating a build team lead by Scott and Li comprising five to six people who only built and did not compete in any knowledge events, for the most part.

The team captains also pressed on this build team to spread out the work they did on their builds – in previous years, most of the building was done within two weeks of competition.

Since building events require considerable prior testing and trial and error, earlier preparation

makes a great difference in performance at competition.

Additionally, the captains noted that they made good choices in the people they chose to move out of the Junior Varsity team between regionals and states, since a large portion of the people they moved ended up medaling at nationals.

While in previous years, the captains said some of these choices seemed to be somewhat biased, this year they made their choices objectively by looking at performance at regionals, work ethic observed during meetings, and general attitude.

Doing well at regionals was also a factor the captains noted when reflecting upon their team's success this year. Everyone on the team got at

least one medal at the regional competition. This helped make everyone more confident going into states, where a good performance was crucial to advancing to nationals, the captains' main goal for this year.

"Hopefully, next year's captains will set higher goals," said Shen. "Almost everyone on our nationals team this year was a junior, so next year's team will probably be really strong," she predicted. This year's captains said that next year, the team should aim to beat Enloe at states, since this year there was only a four point difference between NCSSM and Enloe for getting first place. Then at nationals, the current captains hope that the team gets more medals and places better as a team overall.

## SG President to become member of NCSSM Board of Trustees

By KALI SMITH

Staff Writer

In 2005 the Student Body president started a project that made the previous Chancellor scoff.

"I want our Student Body President to have a seat on our Board of Trustees" and now, following a signature from the Governor, that dream will become a reality.

Through close work between Vice Chancellor of Institutional Advancement

Brock Winslow, Cierra Hinton, Student Government members, and NCSSM Alumni House Representative Jordan '86 and Representative Blackwell, a bill was drafted to add three members to the Board of Trustees.

Two seats would go to people the Chancellor or Board nominated, and one non-voting chair for NCSSM's Student Body President. This proposal was presented before the House

and the Senate, with students from NCSSM there to represent each day, and it faced little to no debate.

In all of the phases in the General Assembly, the bill did not receive a single "no" vote. The state is granting NCSSM students a voice, and encouraged students to speak up because they are starting to listen.

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