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Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

Opposition Motion – ISIS

That the House agree that ISIS is responsible for: (a) crimes against humanity aimed at groups such as Christians, Yazidis, and Shia Muslims, as well as other religious and ethnic minorities in Syria and Iraq; (b) utilizing rape and sexual violence as a weapon of war and enslaving women and girls; and (c) targeting gays and lesbians who have been tortured and murdered; and, as a consequence, that the House strongly condemn these atrocities and declare that these crimes constitute genocide.

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

I rise in the House today to speak to and support a motion that calls on the Liberal government to agree that ISIS is responsible for crimes against humanity aimed at groups such as the Yazidis, Shia Muslims, Christians, and other religious and ethnic minorities in Syria and Iraq; utilizing rape and sexual violence as a weapon of war and enslaving young girls and women; targeting gays and lesbians, who have been tortured and murdered; and, as a consequence, the House strongly condemns these atrocities and declares these crimes as genocide.

This is a motion that I believe all sides of the House should support. The Liberal government cannot and must not turn a blind eye to this situation.

Just within the past few days, and we heard this earlier today, 19 Yazidi girls who refused to have sex with their captors, were put into iron cages and burned alive. Ján Kubiš, UN Special Representative for Iraq, told the UN Security Council that “More than 50 mass graves have been discovered so far in several areas of Iraq” and that ISIS continues the atrocities against women and children.

A United Nations report stated that Yazidi boys between the ages of eight and 15 are being trained as child soldiers and forced to watch beheadings.

As well, the UN estimates that over 3,500 Yazidi women and girls are being held, with many used as sex slaves, while others are sold. In fact, not only have they set up slave auctions in the marketplace, but they have turned to social media and created digital auction blocks. The unfortunate fate of an 11-year-old girl was widely reported just last week when she sold for \$9,000.

It is also reported that more than 5,300 Yazidi have been abducted and more than 3,000 men have been murdered. The UN estimated that another 5,000 Yazidi were killed by ISIS in northern Iraq.

The systematic rape and sexual violence as a weapon of war against women and girls, some as young as the age of six, is an atrocity beyond anyone's comprehension. As well, ISIS uses this as a recruitment tool, letting men know that women and sex are available for the taking at will.

The European Parliament agrees that the atrocities committed by ISIS are genocide. The British members of Parliament agree that the atrocities committed by ISIS are genocide. The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom agrees that the atrocities committed by ISIS are genocide. The Vatican agrees that the atrocities committed by ISIS are genocide. The U.S. House of Representatives voted unanimously that the atrocities committed by ISIS are genocide. The UN Special Representative for Iraq said that violent acts by ISIS—killing, kidnapping, rape, torture—constitute crimes against humanity, war crimes, and even genocide.

Canada is a signatory on an international agreement, the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Crimes of Genocide, which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, and it states that all participating countries are required "to prevent and punish" acts of genocide, whether carried out in war or in peacetime.

Article II of the convention defines genocide as:

...any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- (e) Forceably transferring children of the group to another group.

Every single point of this definition has been violated. It escapes me as to why the Liberal government cannot see what everyone else sees. How many more mass graves need to be discovered? How many more young girls need to be sold and raped? How many people need to be burned alive or beheaded? How many people need to be tortured and murdered? How many families need to be destroyed?

There are 10 million people right now in immediate need of humanitarian aid. Canada has a responsibility to show leadership and to act in a meaningful way. We have the opportunity to ensure that the people who have committed these horrendous acts of violence are held to account. We need to be there for the people who continue to suffer, the women, the young girls, the boys, and the men who have lost their wives and daughters. For all of those who are buried in more than 50 mass graves, we need to show we care. We need to show that they matter and that Canada has not forgotten them. The very first thing we need to do is to bring Yazidi women and children to Canada. It is shameful that only nine families have been brought here and that the Liberal government has cancelled the Iraqi program.

The UN does not recognize the Yazidi people as refugees. They are internally displaced persons. This is the very first step we can take to effect change. It is a concrete action that we should undertake and that the current government should rectify immediately.

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):

Mr. Speaker, the Pope is quite measured in his words. The Vatican has asked world governments to do more to prevent a possible new genocide in Syria and Iraq.

The first step has been taken in the form of the letter our foreign affairs minister wrote just last week. Therefore, I would ask the member opposite if she would like to comment on what the Vatican actually said.

Ms. Dianne L. Watts:

Mr. Speaker, I am absolutely thrilled that the government has sent a letter as a first step. That is great.

If all that comes out of everything I said, with respect to the atrocities that have been committed and Canada's obligation as a signatory on the genocide convention, is for me to clarify a word and wordsmith what the Vatican said, I am deeply offended. I think there are serious issues here that need to be addressed. We need to make sure we are taking care of those people and that no more girls are raped and used as weapons of war. It is abominable.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to my hon. colleague. I think it is the role of this House to be discussing these issues. The atrocities that have been committed in Syria and Iraq are a disgrace to the entire world with respect to the lack of action.

My concern is not with respect to the word play on either side, but it is about dealing with the overall failure of international law and dealing with what is happening, particularly right now. It is not just about ISIS and its brutal and disgraceful activities, but also about what we have seen with the Bashar al-Assad regime and the photos of 11,000 victims of torture and murder, the attacks in Ghouta, the use of chemical weapons that has gone on without any sanction, the deliberate targeting of civilians through barrel bomb attacks and attacks on hospitals. We are dealing with a huge breach of international law that needs to be addressed. I think it is within the role of this Parliament to discuss this.

I would like to ask my hon. colleague about the need to look at the larger frame, where ISIS is playing a very destructive role among a number of players, including a supposedly legitimate government that has been supported by various western allies.

Ms. Dianne L. Watts:

Mr. Speaker, I would agree 100% with my colleague. The atrocities that are going on right now with ISIS absolutely have to be addressed. We need to get out there. We need to do whatever we can, but there are also other things that are going on as the member well pointed out.

There are governments that are perpetrating barrel-bombing on their residents. That is unacceptable. Look at Libya and what is happening with Boko Haram. There is a larger picture here that absolutely needs to be addressed and we need to have a concrete plan in place in terms of how we are going to deal with it, in terms of who we can pull in from an international perspective, and how we are going to address it. It is a broader picture and right now we are

dealing with what is going on with the Yazidi people and what is going on in Iraq, but that should absolutely be on the table and we should be dealing with that as well.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, I really liked hearing the definition of genocide. I thought that was very helpful in making it clear. I wonder if my colleague could reflect on that and provide some examples to show that it has really occurred.

Ms. Dianne L. Watts:

Mr. Speaker, I do not think that there is any doubt in anyone's mind. The UN special representatives in Iraq are there on the ground. They have uncovered up to 50 mass graves. They are doing due diligence on the ground. They have seen and photographed and documented a lot of the atrocities that have occurred. There are pictures of the 19 young girls in a cage who were burned alive. There are pictures. ISIS has no problem posting these all over social media. As I said, they are on the ground as well.

I cannot stress enough that we are a signatory and every single piece has been violated. We have a responsibility and we need to do our job.