

Interview: YPG spokesman Nuri Mahmoud on ISIS prisoners

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Recently, the YPG and other authorities in Northern Syria have announced that they want countries whose citizens joined ISIS to take back their foreign fighters who are currently imprisoned by YPG forces there. Nuri Mahmoud, who is the YPG spokesman, discusses the situation and the international community's responsibility.

The interview was conducted by Ronahi Elik, Berivan Botan, and Dr. Thoreau Redcrow with the Kevok Foundation.

How many total prisoners of ISIS does the YPG/J or SDF currently hold?

The number of ISIS prisoners in our hands numbers around 900 men. Along with these are approximately 500 ISIS wives and more than 1,000 of their children.

How many nations are represented amongst these prisoners?

Those ISIS prisoners we currently hold are from 44 different countries.

Have any of these nations taken their ISIS prisoners back from YPG?

Only four nations have, they are Russia, Sudan, Indonesia, and the United States, who all took back one singular woman.

Ideally, what would the YPG like to see happen with these ISIS prisoners?

As you know, the ISIS terrorists we have captured and now hold are from all around the world. Importantly, their organization did not only perform terrorist attacks within Syria, but also in Europe, America, Asia, and throughout the wider Middle East. For this reason the punishment of these terrorists must be carried out within the legal framework of international law. They must be brought before an international tribunal.

Currently, the leadership of the DFNS (Democratic Federation of Northern Syria) is expected to bear this heavy burden alone, which is wrong. Many states are not interested in helping us bring these men to justice for their crimes. This is in contrast to most of the citizens of these nations, who we believe would like to see these ISIS prisoners face punishment for their vile actions.

Now, with the available resources we have, some emergency courts have been established to investigate these prisoners, but we do not have the resources to carry out this process with all of them, while simultaneously fighting battles for our own survival. But nobody should forget that these ISIS prisoners pose a great danger to all of humanity and the entire world. Anyone who wants a safer and more humane world should support us and our mission to rid the globe of ISIS and deranged groups like them.

What would you say to those who think these ISIS prisoners deserve the death penalty, and that YPG should just execute them for their crimes?

It is indisputable that these ISIS terrorists have carried out the worst and most heinous crimes against humanity throughout the world: they beheaded people, raped women, used child soldiers, enslaved Yazidis, and eradicated historical sites such as churches, mosques, and even graveyards. They also destroyed and looted people's homes, while committing unspeakable crimes in every way imaginable. For this reason they undoubtedly deserve the maximum and most severe punishment possible.

However, we in Rojava and Northern Syria do not carry out the death penalty for capital punishment, as we do not have a law that allows it, so this does not pose an option for us. And it is important to us that we act in line with our existing judicial system.

As for the international community, some of them may decide that these ISIS

prisoners do deserve the death penalty, but this decision must be made collectively through an established legal process. The world cannot just expect us to handle the punishment for ISIS alone, as they are a global threat and deserve an agreed upon global response of their fate.