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From Daesh to 'Diaspora' II: The Challenges Posed by Women and Minors After the Fall of the Caliphate

By Joana Cook and Gina Vale

The Islamic State has lost its final territory in Syria, but the international community now faces an array of complex and difficult challenges, in particular those related to the up to 52,808 foreigners now recorded by the authors with the group including up to 6,902 foreign women and up to 6,577 foreign minors. Of unique concern are the minors born to parents in the 'caliphate' established by the Islamic State who represent up to 60 percent of total minors currently accounted for in countries with strong data on this issue. Returning home to varied state responses, up to eight percent of the up to 8,202 returnees are now recorded as women, and up to 20 percent minors. Thousands more remain in limbo in the region, however, and significant gaps in the data leave this picture incomplete.

In March 2019, the Islamic State lost the final territorial remnant of its 'caliphate' in Baghouz. Yet its demise has left the international community with a myriad of complex and difficult challenges, including how to deal with the many women and minors from across the globe recruited by, taken by, or born into the group. In July 2018, a dataset compiled by the authors revealed that of 80 countries beyond Syria and Iraq, women accounted for up to 13 percent (4,761)^{1a} and minors 12 percent (4,640) of the total 41,490 foreign persons who were recorded to have traveled to, or were born inside, Islamic State territory.^{2b} These figures were unprecedented and the direct result of the territorial and governance ambitions of the Islamic State, which drew 'citizens'

a In this article, women are defined as adults aged 18 and above. See Joana Cook and Gina Vale, "From 'Daesh' to 'Diaspora': Tracing the Women and Minors of Islamic State," International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation, July 2018, p. 13 for further discussion.

b In this article, minors are defined as those 17 and below. Minors are further distinguished as teenagers (15-17), children (5-14), and infants (0-4). See *Ibid.* for further discussion.

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from around the world. Yet, at that time (July 2018), only 26 states had published reliable information for both of these two interrelated, though distinct populations, raising the likelihood of significant underestimation.

Beyond the fall of the caliphate, three trends have prompted a reexamination of the status of Islamic State-affiliated women and minors. First, due to the group's duration of occupation, an increasing number of Islamic State-affiliated women have borne children. Of the 10 countries with strong data on minors, 44-60 percent have been reported as infants born in theater, highlighting the potential scale and long-term implications of this matter.^c Second, a significant number of women remained with the Islamic State until its final stand in Baghouz and now require varied responses. Some are devout, battle-hardened members, while others may seek to leave this chapter of their life behind them. Third, due to the tens of thousands of adult males killed in counter-Islamic State and Islamic State operations,^d the proportion of women and minors present in the remaining Islamic State population in Syria and Iraq is higher than ever and therefore must be reflected in all responses to the group.^e

This article reexamines the status of Islamic State-affiliated women and minors, and the present challenges posed by these two distinct populations. Updating the authors' dataset from July 2018,³ this article compiles the most recent figures for Islamic State-affiliated travelers, returnees, and detainees, and for the first time includes distinct figures for Islamic State-born infants. It considers how states have been responding to returnees and the long-term inter-generational concerns associated with these diverse populations, and it also provides considerations for international actors going forward.

Methodology

Obtaining precise figures for foreigners affiliated with the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria remains a challenging task. The methodology for the original dataset in 2018 has been repeated.⁴ Figures

c These countries include Albania, Belgium, Bosnia, Canada, France, Kosovo, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, and Sweden. All figures are in Table 1.

d The Islamic State actively recruited and utilized males under the age of 18. However, there are currently no clear figures of how many male minors were killed in battles against the Islamic State. Discussing the entire Islamic State foreign fighter population, Edmund Fitton-Brown, the Coordinator for the ISIL (Daesh)/Al-Qaida/Taliban Monitoring Team at the United Nations, estimated an attrition rate of "over a quarter," but acknowledged "nobody knows the true figures." Paul Cruickshank, "A View from the CT Foxhole: Edmund Fitton-Brown, Coordinator, ISIL (Daesh)/Al-Qaida/Taliban Monitoring Team, United Nations," *CTC Sentinel* 12:4 (2019).

e Estimates that account for both foreign and local Islamic State followers killed have ranged from 25,000-70,000 and do not distinguish between men, women, and minors. A discussion on casualties on the battlefield is discussed at length in Cook and Vale, pp. 41-42.

have been updated based on information released between July 2018 and July 2019, cross-referenced with the previous dataset, and where possible verified by regional experts. Several challenges remain. Many countries continue to not publish figures; others have only acknowledged ‘foreign terrorist fighters’ (FTFs)^f or do not distinguish women and minors.^g Others may not have the means to track the movement of all their citizens. Some states have increasingly released figures, while others’ data proves contradictory and diverse, which is reflected in the dataset, particularly seen in the ranges included.

Updated Global Figures

Two developments impact the issue of returnees: more countries have clarified figures for women and minors who became affiliated with the Islamic State,^h and there are an increasing number of recorded foreign Islamic State-born infants. This has raised not only the authors’ global estimates of all foreign Islamic State affiliated persons (men, women, and minors), including those now deceased to 44,279-52,808, but specifically women to 6,797-6,902 and minors to 6,173-6,577.ⁱ Increasing numbers of women and minors have also returned to their countries of origin.

Returnees

A number of observations emerge. First is the important distinction between state-managed repatriation initiatives and independent return. Where governments control the flow and return of persons back to their country, they are better able to manage them, while those who return independently may be unmonitored or unaccounted for.^j Second, the post-return realities of Islamic State affiliates vary by country. Some face immediate arrest, prosecution, and imprisonment. Others receive deradicalization and rehabilitation services or differing extents of physical, economic, or psycho-social support and return to normal life. Almost all, including women and minors, face social stigma for their time with the Islamic State.

- f The Rescue Association of Tunisians Trapped Abroad acknowledged 970 “fighters” have returned from Syria and Iraq. Lindsey Snell, “The ISIS recruits that won’t be coming home,” *Daily Beast*, March 20, 2018.
- g The United Kingdom has only acknowledged 40-50 percent have returned without distinguishing women and minors in these. Matthew Offord and Sajid Javid, “UK Nationals Returning from Syria – in the House of Commons,” *theyworkforyou.com*, February 18, 2019; Kim Sengupta, “War Against Isis: Security Services Bracing for Possible Return of Thousands of Jihadists as Group Loses Territory,” *Independent*, September 5, 2016.
- h This article uses the word “affiliated” to account for the distinctions between both the roles of various persons within the group (not all of whom picked up arms), as well as the level of volition present in their joining the Islamic State. This is particularly true for minors who were forcibly taken by their parents, or infants born into the organization, who must now be addressed in comprehensive responses to the Islamic State.
- i This figure of 44,279-52,808 comprises all foreign persons who between 2013 and June 2019 became affiliated with the Islamic State in its Levantine territory. A significant number of these persons were killed in Syria and Iraq so it does not represent actual figures for populations being responded to today.
- j The United States has offered its assistance to any country willing to repatriate its citizens and has facilitated a number of returns, while others such as Kazakhstan have been active in independently repatriating hundreds of its citizens (though reportedly with U.S. mediation). “5 ISIS militants, families returned to Kazakhstan with US mediation: SDF,” *Rudaw*, January 7, 2019.

Yet, many countries do not publicly acknowledge their citizens’ return.^k Women and minors may also be excluded or undistinguished in returnee figures or may return undetected. However, total confirmed returnees have increased in the authors’ updated dataset, albeit minimally since June 2018—from 7,145-7,366⁵ to 7,712-8,202—with the greatest proportion found in the Southeast Asia region (up to 33 percent of those who traveled to, or were born within, the Islamic State) and Western Europe (28-29 percent).

Women

In 2018, only 256 women (five percent of total returnees) who had traveled to join the Islamic State had been recorded as returned to their country of departure.^l By July 2019, up to 609 women of those who traveled had been recorded as returned, comprising up to eight percent of all returnees, or nine percent of women who traveled. However, these figures may not accurately capture the true picture. Statements from the United Kingdom^m and European Unionⁿ have suggested that women and minors have been returning more frequently than men over the past two years, even if these were not acknowledged or distinguished at the country level.

Media portrayals of Islamic State-affiliated women have generally oscillated between victims taken or duped by their husbands, naive ‘jihadi brides,’ or active security concerns. Where framed in security terms, there appears to be less political will or public acceptance to return women. In contrast, where viewed more in terms of victimhood or naïveté, prospects for redemption and rehabilitation may appear more in public discourses.

Russia had been actively repatriating women up to November 2017, whereafter only minors were accepted due to women being perceived as security risks.^o Kazakhstan has taken a proactive approach, repatriating 137-139 women through its three-part ‘Operation Zhusan’ between January and May 2019. Upon arrival, women are isolated at a rehabilitation and reintegration center and face

- k The reasons for this are varied and may include security or intelligence motivations; political motivations driven by fear of public backlash; and privacy and safeguarding issues (particularly in the case of minors).
- l The word “recorded” acknowledges that even when greater numbers of women have returned, these are not publicly acknowledged or distinguished in some cases.
- m In the United Kingdom, women and minors have generally been noted to be returning, even though the authors’ table records only two women and four minors have been publicly recorded as returned. The United Kingdom’s 2018 CONTEST counterterrorism strategy noted, “The majority of those who have returned did so in the earlier stages of the conflict, and were investigated on their return. Only a very small number of travellers have returned in the last two years, and most of those have been women with young children.” The reason for not distinguishing these women and minors within total U.K. returnee figures is unclear. “CONTEST: The United Kingdom’s Strategy for Countering Terrorism,” HM Government, June 2018, p. 18.
- n In a January 2017 interview, Wil van Gemert, Deputy Director of Europol and Head of Operations, noted that “those recently fleeing back to Europe have mostly been women and children,” though he did not spell out how this was manifested country by country in the European Union. Paul Cruickshank, “A View from the CT Foxhole: Peter Edge, ICE Acting Deputy Director, and Wil van Gemert, Europol Deputy Director,” *CTC Sentinel* 10:1 (2017).
- o The concern of female militancy is particularly acute in Russia where women have been active in Islamist militancy, including in the Chechnya context as the so-called ‘black widows’ who acted as suicide bombers. Ilya Arkhipov, “Putin Shows Rare Soft Spot to Rescue Russia’s ISIS Children,” *Bloomberg*, February 1, 2019.

questioning by security services. While many return home and continue to be monitored, at least five women have been charged with terrorism-related offenses.⁶ Indonesia, with 54 confirmed female returnees, has also managed a large-scale rehabilitation and reintegration program.⁷ At least one woman went on to attempt an explosive attack and now faces the death penalty.⁸ Here, reintegration at the community level has been specifically tailored to women, including economic empowerment programs.⁹ With such programming, public safety must remain a paramount concern. Adequate planning, resources, and gendered considerations must be integrated at every step, together with the active participation and support of community organizations and families.¹⁰ Yet, such tailored programs remain rare.

Some women have been prosecuted upon return, including British woman Tareena Shakil.¹¹ ‘Jennifer W.,’ a 27-year old German returnee, was charged with the murder of an enslaved Yazidi child, war crimes, membership in a foreign terror organization, and weapons violations.¹² Sabine S. also became the first woman convicted in Germany of belonging to a foreign terrorist organization.¹³ Yet, this route remains challenging as the type of evidence obtained against men, such as recordings of their direct involvement in Islamic State activities, is more limited for women who rarely appeared in propaganda.¹⁴ However, women within the Islamic State may also have been privy to information that may help facilitate the prosecution of other members.

There has also been increased focus on the gender dimensions of criminal justice responses to counterterrorism¹⁵ and evidence that women may be arrested, charged, and sentenced differently (often more leniently) than men.¹⁶ Countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States have opted to strip or deny citizenship, as demonstrated in the cases of Shamima Begum or Hoda Muthana,¹⁶ raising broader questions about rights and identity of first- and second-generation immigrants in these countries. Though many trajectories remain possible for Islamic State-affiliated women, repatriation, prosecution, rehabilitation, and reintegration (as appropriate) remain the most feasible for their successful long-term monitoring.

Minors

By July 2018, 411-1,180 minors were recorded as confirmed and in-process returnees. A constant trend from 2018 is the international community’s prioritization of repatriation of minors. In total, 1,460-1,525 minors (22-25 percent) have now returned to their country of departure (or the country of their parents), representing up to 20 percent of total returnees. For some states, such as Tajikistan and Saudi Arabia, this is the result of proactive collaboration with local authorities to identify and return their underage nationals.¹⁷ Yet, these efforts are predominantly framed as ‘rescue’ missions to recover young children whose Islamic State affiliation was not through their own volition. This was epitomized by the reunion of a Trinidadian mother and her two sons, which was facilitated by Pink Floyd’s Roger Waters.¹⁸ This framing of the issue has put mounting pressure on hitherto unresponsive governments. For some, repatriation of the most vulnerable Islamic State-affiliated

population can be presented as a politically acceptable concession.¹⁹ A salient example is Norway’s repatriation of five orphans,²⁰ out of 40 minors in the conflict zone. This arguably creates a ‘hierarchy of victimhood,’ in which those seen to be most helpless and unthreatening are prioritized.

Despite increasing awareness and efforts to repatriate minors, national initiatives remain limited and ad-hoc. In February 2017, a French official stated approximately 700 French minors were in the conflict zone.²¹ It was boldly announced, “they will return to France, it is just a question of time.”²¹ France later tapered this, pledging to return only 150 minors, stipulating “the mothers of any repatriated children would be left in Syria.”²² Yet, by June 2019, only 107 minors had been confirmed as returned.²³ In contrast, Kazakhstan has repatriated 357 minors in quick succession.²³

The repatriation of minors, particularly infants, also raises the issue of separation from their Islamic State-affiliated parent(s). Although Islamic State-affiliated parents have endangered their children through their travel to Islamic State territory, separation could also exacerbate trauma experienced by minors. Furthermore, blanket separation policies may prove harmful if custody is granted to other family members also holding extremist views.²⁴ This reinforces the need to assess the parameters of repatriation and rehabilitative needs for minors on a case-by-case basis.

Despite momentum shifting toward repatriation and rehabilitation, some countries have adopted a security-first approach, adding additional barriers to minors’ return. In Australia, Islamic State-affiliated minors from age 14 can have their citizenship revoked under recent legislation.²⁵ This also applies to children of ‘suspected terrorists.’²⁶ Denmark introduced legislation that refuses the automatic assignment of citizenship to infants born to Islamic State-affiliated parents²⁷—the result of increasing public fears of the security threat that minors may pose upon return. Some officials have also (unhelpfully) referred to these children as a “ticking time bomb.”²⁸ It is important that countries acknowledge and address minors’ indoctrination through the Islamic State’s education and training programs.²⁹ However, approaches that generalize, securitize, and further victimize minors—instead of addressing their developmental needs—will compromise the effectiveness and sustainability of rehabilitation and reintegration initiatives.

Detainees

Another critical issue is the predicament of thousands of foreign Islamic State affiliates imprisoned in Iraq and detained by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in Syria of which foreign women account-

p As women’s roles were primarily prescribed in the domestic sphere, offenses were more likely to have occurred in the home with local or enslaved women, making such evidence even harder to attain.

q It was noted that of the 700, half are under the age of five and a third were born inside Islamic State territory. “700 mineurs français vont rentrer de Syrie [700 French Minors Will Return from Syria],” *Figaro*, February 2, 2017.

r Ninety-five minors were repatriated up until April 2019, with a further 12 repatriated in June 2019. Paule Gonzalès, “95 enfants de djihadistes rentrés en France depuis 2015 [95 French Children of Jihadists Returned to France Since 2015],” *Figaro*, April 1, 2019; “Syrian Kurds transfer 12 orphans from jihadist families to France for repatriation,” *France 24*, June 10, 2019.

ed for up to 5,350 and foreign minors 8,580.^s Iraq has tried thousands of persons in controversial court proceedings,³⁰ and indefinite SDF-detention in Syria is unlikely. Several considerations pertinent to women and minors detained in the region have become visible.³¹

Women

In Iraq in 2018 alone, 616 foreigners were tried and convicted of Islamic State membership, receiving varied sentences of up to life in prison, or even the death penalty. A staggering 466 of these were women, 108 of these minors, and only 42 of these men, and it was noted that “most of the women sentenced for ISIS links were from Turkey and republics of the former Soviet Union.”³² For those who did receive the death sentence, these have not yet been carried out. For countries that oppose capital punishment, there are reports that Iraq has been willing to commute these sentences, for a price.^t However, serious concerns over flawed and swift trials and human rights violations in detention remain.³³ If paid, Iraq has also offered to receive, try, and hold thousands of foreigners currently in SDF custody, including women, only compounding these concerns.³⁴

Women currently in SDF custody face similar potential trajectories as men. These were well outlined recently by Brian Michael Jenkins in this publication, who identified eight local and multilateral options for dealing with these detainees.³⁵ Yet, the proportion of women makes these options more complex and demands gendered considerations at every step. Of the three major SDF-administered refugee and internment camps in northeast Syria out of its total population, al-Hol alone hosts 12,000 Islamic State-affiliated foreigners—4,000 are women and 8,000 are minors. In contrast, SDF forces are holding only 1,000 men deemed ‘fighters’ across its prisons.³⁶ These persons do not have access to fair trial and cannot be held indefinitely—an important pillar of international law and another reason to repatriate citizens.³⁷

For women currently detained in the region, there is a challenge of identifying persons in custody. Upon arrival in Iraq and Syria, many foreigners destroyed or surrendered their identification and may seek to conceal their identity.^u There is also a lack of deradicalization and rehabilitative services available while detained or upon

release, highlighting long-term hurdles for reintegration. While many detention facilities, particularly in Europe, have segregated areas for those convicted of terrorism offenses, such units do not (as far as the authors are aware) exist in Iraq for women, meaning that women who still adhere to the Islamic State’s ideology may radicalize others or their children.^v While SDF camps have segregated annexes for foreign women and minors suspected of being associated with the Islamic State, the same concern related to their children remains.^w The potential for inter-generational radicalization has already been highlighted as a long-term strategic concern by senior officials.^x

Minors

Despite more promising rates of repatriation and return for Islamic State-affiliated minors, thousands languish in limbo within prisons, camps, and detention centers in Iraq and Syria. According to a Reuters report in March 2019, an estimated “1,100 children of Islamic State are caught in the wheels of Iraqi justice.”^y For the youngest, detention in Iraqi government facilities is the direct result of their parents’ Islamic State affiliation and conviction for terrorism offenses.³⁸ Foreign infants and toddlers are now being raised in crowded and unsanitary cells.³⁹ Two hundred foreign infants have reportedly been born inside one Baghdad prison alone.⁴⁰ Before the decision was taken to separate and repatriate only the children,⁴¹ seven minors have perished in the poor conditions.⁴² Recently, mothers from countries such as Tajikistan have refused permission for their children to be repatriated without them, resulting in 17 Tajik minors remaining in Iraqi prisons.⁴³

In line with the national minimum age of criminal responsibility, Iraqi authorities deem children from the age of nine to be legally accountable for their involvement in the Islamic State.⁴⁴ This contravenes international standards, which stipulate that children recruited to non-state armed groups are “primarily victims who should be provided with assistance for their rehabilitation and reintegration.”⁴⁵ Charges and prosecutions range from illegal entrance into Iraq to fighting for the Islamic State, and 108 foreign boys and 77 foreign girls have received sentences from a few months to up to 15 years in juvenile detention.⁴⁶ Of even greater concern are reports of arbitrary arrest, forced confessions, and torture of juvenile Islamic State suspects in Iraqi and Kurdish custody.⁴⁷ Such actions can be harmful and counterproductive, and may create further barriers for minors to reintegrate into society upon release, psychologically and physically alienating individuals branded as ‘Islamic State-sup-

s It should be noted here that there is a disconnect between this figure and the authors’ dataset, which only shows a number of foreign minors affiliated with the Islamic State up to 6,577. The significant number of countries that still do not publicly record disaggregated data for minors reinforces that the figure in the authors’ dataset continues to be an underestimation. Iraq: 1,350 women and 580 minors. Syria: 4,000 women and 8,000 minors. Margaret Coker and Falih Hassan, “A 10-Minute Trial, a Death Sentence: Iraqi Justice for ISIS Suspects,” *New York Times*, April 17, 2018; Ben Hubbard, “In a Crowded Syria Tent Camp, the Women and Children of ISIS Wait in Limbo,” *New York Times*, March 29, 2019; Quentin Sommerville, “There are 12,000 foreigners in Kurdish custody. 4000 women- 8000 kids. Men, 1000+ From more than 50 countries. That’s not including Iraqis and Syrians,” Twitter, April 12, 2019.

t In the case of 11 French citizens, the Iraqi government reportedly requested \$1 million per person to commute their death sentences to life in prison. It is not clear if these citizens included women or if women will be treated differently in such cases. David Chazan, “Iraq offers to commute death sentences of French Isis members for ‘millions of euros,’” *Telegraph*, June 2, 2019.

u Reasons for concealment of identity may include avoiding authorities if the individual has committed a crime or if they do not wish to return home and hope to stay in the region. Thanks to Petra Ramsauer for highlighting this last point.

v Such a scenario is reminiscent of Camp Bucca, where the forging of relationships and the hardening of ideological convictions preceded the rise of the Islamic State.

w In contrast to Iraq, women or minors have not been charged or tried in SDF-held territory. OCHA, “Syria: Humanitarian response in al-Hol camp,” Situation Report No. 5, July 5, 2019.

x Major General Alexis Grynkewich, deputy commander of Operation Inherent Resolve who oversees joint and coalition operations, recently stated the potential for radicalization in these camps is “the biggest long-term strategic risk” outside of active military operations in efforts to counter the Islamic State. Richard Hall, “‘Hardcore’ Isis ideologues held in Syrian camps represent long-term risk, warns US-led coalition,” *Independent*, July 3, 2019.

y These comprise both foreign and local minors. Raya Jalabi, “Special Report: Forgotten victims - The children of Islamic State,” Reuters, March 21, 2019.

porters.’

Minors face even greater uncertainty and insecurity in SDF-controlled camps. Al-Hol currently holds 73,000 foreign and local Islamic State ‘family members;’ 49,000 are minors, of which 95 percent are under the age of 12.⁴⁸ Many sustained injuries prior to accessing these camps and have since contracted diseases and suffer from severe malnutrition, with more than 300 children dying in the first weeks after they departed Baghouz.⁴⁹ This concern is further compounded by the scarcity of resources divided among residents that far exceed the camp’s maximum capacity.⁵⁰ Approximately 8,000 of these are foreign children either born into or relocated to Islamic State territory with their parents, several hundred of whom are now separated or orphaned.^{51 z} For Islamic State-born infants, undocumented status and legal statelessness can restrict access to short-term benefits and aid inside camps, as well as long-term employment opportunities and permanent residency upon release.⁵²

The continued security-first approach to Islamic State-affiliated minors has led to few state-level repatriations, leaving thousands in limbo or at the mercy of rapid judicial processes. While recognizing the complex legal and logistical issues involved in repatriation, such lags in response appear to neglect minors’ welfare and development. This risks further alienation and stigmatization, deepening their ‘Islamic State-affiliate’ identity and fueling similar grievances that provided fertile soil for the Islamic State’s rise.

Conclusion

Over the last year, modest but important progress has been made to address issues resulting from the Islamic State’s territorial collapse. The need to recognize, record, and assess the status of women and minors in relation to political violence at every step is clear. It enables nuanced analysis of the demographic of the Islamic State, and the strategies, tactics, and objectives it engages, while informing responses to other groups who pursue state-building.

Returnee figures recorded for women since July 2018 have almost tripled, and the plight of minors and infants has captured international attention. The disaggregated figures for women and minors in this dataset demonstrate the need to act in accordance

with their status as interrelated, though distinct populations, with the flexibility and nuance to respond to each case in turn.

For women, it is critical to assess the varying levels of individual agency based on their unique circumstances of joining, the plurality of their roles in the group, and possible continued support for, or disavowment of, the group. Assessments should take into account the risk that some women may pose, both in security terms and the possibility of radicalizing others. Action must also be taken in accordance with legal norms and with respect of human rights, including access to fair trials and gender-conscious rehabilitation and reintegration programs. Stripping citizenship of adults has potentially adverse implications. Such policies foster societal tensions and alienation born from a ‘hierarchy’ of citizenship and risk pushing these individuals to countries who may not be willing or adequately equipped to manage them.

For minors, stripping or denying citizenship is even more problematic. This creates barriers to access benefits, rights, and services that are needed to facilitate true reintegration into society. Fortunately, repatriation and rehabilitation of minors is a more common point of agreement and concession, yet still appears to prioritize specific groups, such as infants or orphans. Minors should have their rights and development put first, and initiatives that address healthcare, education, and psychosocial support should be prioritized. A rehabilitation-first approach responds to individual needs, provides an effective counterpoint to the Islamic State’s indoctrination, and offers a new ‘non-Islamic State’ identity on which to build a future.

Justice and recovery for the victims of the Islamic State, as well as prevention of future instability and conflict in the region, is paramount, but it is jeopardized by states’ inaction or hesitancy to manage their citizens.^{aa} This is an inter-generational challenge, one that requires a nuanced and long-term approach. A transparent and rights-based process will provide justice for both Islamic State members and their victims, as well as demonstrate the values of the international community in contrast with the Islamic State. This, however, is the long game. It requires courage to overcome the temptation of vengeance; flexibility and collaboration to work across national jurisdictions; and patience to implement tailored and sustainable solutions. **CTC**

z The authors’ 2018 dataset records less than 8,000 minors, excluding those already returned. This demonstrates that not adequately and publicly acknowledging women and minors can produce consequences such as underestimations, which may limit preparation and response for such significant populations.

aa This is exemplified by some states’ public acknowledgment of “losing track” of their Islamic State-affiliated citizens. “Germany loses track of 160 ‘Islamic State’ supporters,” Deutsche Welle, June 23, 2019.

Country	Minor Affiliates (includes traveled and born in theater)	Infants (confirmed born in theater)	Female Affiliates	Total Affiliates	Minor Returnees	Female Returnees	Total Returnees
<i>Middle East and North Africa (MENA)</i>							
Algeria				175 ⁵³ -278 ⁵⁴	6 ⁵⁵	4 ⁵⁶	116 ⁵⁷
Bahrain				100 ⁵⁸			
Egypt	10 ICR ⁵⁹		5 ICR ⁶⁰	600 ⁶¹			600 ⁶²
Israel	4 ICR ⁶³		3 ICR ⁶⁴	60 ⁶⁵	3 ICR ⁶⁶	1 ICR ⁶⁷	10 ⁶⁸
Iran			16 ⁶⁹	21 ⁷⁰		16 ⁷¹	21 ⁷²
Jordan				3,000-3,950 ⁷³			300 ⁷⁴
Kuwait				150 ⁷⁵			6 ⁷⁶
Lebanon	6 ICR ⁷⁷	1 ICR ⁷⁸		900 ⁷⁹	5 ICR ⁸⁰	1 ICR ⁸¹	14 ICR ⁸²
Libya				600 ⁸³			8 ⁸⁴
Morocco	391 ⁸⁵		293 ⁸⁶	1,698 ⁸⁷	15 ⁸⁸	52 ⁸⁹	253 ⁹⁰ -308 ⁹¹
Saudi Arabia			46 ⁹²	3,244 ⁹³	2 ICR ⁹⁴		762 ⁹⁵
Sudan			19 ICR ⁹⁶	70-140 ⁹⁷	2 ICR ⁹⁸	1 ICR ⁹⁹	5 ICR ¹⁰⁰
Turkey	476 ¹⁰¹	1 ICR ¹⁰²	2,000 ¹⁰³	7,476-9,476 ^{*104}	243 ¹⁰⁵		243 ¹⁰⁶
Tunisia	*107		700 ¹⁰⁸	4,000 ¹⁰⁹ -6,500 ¹¹⁰			970 ¹¹¹
Yemen			1 ICR ¹¹²	110 ¹¹³			
Total	877	2	3,083	22,204-27,827	276	75	3,300-3,355
Women and minors as % of total	3-4%		11-14%		8%	2%	
<i>Eastern Europe</i>							
Albania	38 ¹¹⁴ -41 ¹¹⁵	13 ¹¹⁶	29 ¹¹⁷ -35 ¹¹⁸	157 ¹¹⁹ -163 ¹²⁰			44 ¹²¹ -45 ¹²²
Azerbaijan	19 ¹²³ -22 ¹²⁴		200 ¹²⁵	900 ¹²⁶	22 ¹²⁷		71 ¹²⁸
Belarus	3 ICR ¹²⁹			3 ICR ¹³⁰	3 ICR ¹³¹		3 ICR ¹³²
Bosnia	230 ¹³³	150 ¹³⁴	70 ¹³⁵	500 ¹³⁶	7 ¹³⁷	6 ¹³⁸	56 ¹³⁹
Bulgaria				10 ¹⁴⁰			
Croatia			4-5 ¹⁴¹	7 ¹⁴²			
Georgia	1 ICR ¹⁴³		17 ¹⁴⁴	41 ¹⁴⁵ -200 ¹⁴⁶	3 ICR		15-20 ¹⁴⁷
Kosovo	98 ¹⁴⁸	40 ¹⁴⁹	55 ¹⁵⁰	446 ¹⁵¹	77 ¹⁵²	39 ¹⁵³	243 ¹⁵⁴
Latvia				2 ¹⁵⁵			
Macedonia	6 ICR ¹⁵⁶		15 ¹⁵⁷	161 ¹⁵⁸			72-86 ¹⁵⁹
Moldova				1 ¹⁶⁰			
Montenegro	4 ¹⁶¹	1 ¹⁶²	5 ¹⁶³	27 ¹⁶⁴	1 ¹⁶⁵	1 ¹⁶⁶	10 ¹⁶⁷
Poland				20-40 ¹⁶⁸			
Romania				1 ¹⁶⁹			
Russia	1,600 ¹⁷⁰	57 ICR ¹⁷¹	1,000 ¹⁷²	4,000-5,000 ¹⁷³	145 ¹⁷⁴ -200 ¹⁷⁵	24 ¹⁷⁶	452-507 ¹⁷⁷
Serbia	15 ¹⁷⁸		20 ¹⁷⁹	59 ¹⁸⁰			7 ¹⁸¹
Slovakia				6 ¹⁸²			

Slovenia				10 ¹⁸³			2 ¹⁸⁴
Ukraine	5 ICR ¹⁸⁵		3 ICR ¹⁸⁶	8 ICR ¹⁸⁷	1 ICR ¹⁸⁸		1 ICR ¹⁸⁹
Total	2,019-2,025	261	1,418-1,425	6,359-7,544	259-314	70	976-1,051
Women and minors as % of total	27-32%		19-22%		25-32%	7%	
Central Asia							
Kazakhstan	649-749 ¹⁹⁰		150 ¹⁹¹	1,136-1,236 ¹⁹²	420 ¹⁹³	137 ¹⁹⁴ -139 ¹⁹⁵	594 ¹⁹⁶
Kyrgyzstan	130-140 ¹⁹⁷		188 ¹⁹⁸	863 ¹⁹⁹			63 ²⁰⁰
Tajikistan	293 ²⁰¹		279 ²⁰²	1,899 ²⁰³ - 2,000 ²⁰⁴	131 ²⁰⁵ -141 ²⁰⁶	1 ICR ²⁰⁷	400-410 ²⁰⁸
Turkmenistan			2 ICR ²⁰⁹	360 ²¹⁰ -500 ²¹¹			
Uzbekistan	92 ²¹²	1 ICR ²¹³	1 ICR ²¹⁴	1,500 ²¹⁵ - 2,500 ²¹⁶	91 ²¹⁷	59 ²¹⁸	148-300 ²¹⁹
Total	1,164-1,274	1	620	5,758-7,099	642-652	197-199	1,205-1,367
Women and minors as % of total	16-22%		9-11%		47-54%	14-17%	
Western Europe							
Austria	20 ²²⁰ -40 ²²¹	2 ICR ²²²	37 ²²³	256 ²²⁴	1 ICR ²²⁵	13 ²²⁶	94 ²²⁷
Belgium	175 ²²⁸	142 ²²⁹	93 ²³⁰	602 ²³¹	25 ²³²	26 ²³³	160 ²³⁴
Denmark			18 ²³⁵	150 ²³⁶			72 ²³⁷
Finland	42 ²³⁸	12 ²³⁹	20 ²⁴⁰	122 ²⁴¹	2 ICR ²⁴²		43 ²⁴³
France	460 ²⁴⁴ -700 ²⁴⁵	150 ²⁴⁶ -233 ²⁴⁷	300 ²⁴⁸ -382 ²⁴⁹	1,910 ²⁵⁰	107 ²⁵¹	78 ²⁵²	376 ²⁵³ -410 ²⁵⁴
Germany	290 ²⁵⁵	*256	165 ²⁵⁷	1,268 ²⁵⁸	19 ²⁵⁹	53 ²⁶⁰	357 ²⁶¹
Iceland				1 ²⁶²			
Ireland	2 ICR ²⁶³	2 ICR ²⁶⁴	1 ICR ²⁶⁵	30 ²⁶⁶	1 ICR ²⁶⁷	1 ICR ²⁶⁸	2 ²⁶⁹
Italy	11 ²⁷⁰		12 ²⁷¹	138 ²⁷²		1 ICR ²⁷³	8 ²⁷⁴ -12 ²⁷⁵
Luxembourg				1 ²⁷⁶			
Netherlands	185 ²⁷⁷	117 ²⁷⁸	105 ²⁷⁹	432 ²⁸⁰	12 ²⁸¹	17 ²⁸²	67 ²⁸³
Norway	40 ²⁸⁴	40 ²⁸⁵	10 ²⁸⁶	140-150 ²⁸⁷	5 ²⁸⁸		45 ²⁸⁹
Portugal	2 ICR ²⁹⁰	2 ICR ²⁹¹	4 ICR ²⁹²	15 ²⁹³		2 ICR ²⁹⁴	2 ICR ²⁹⁵
Spain	17 ²⁹⁶	1 ICR ²⁹⁷	21 ²⁹⁸	208 ²⁹⁹			37 ³⁰⁰ -46 ³⁰¹
Sweden	80 ³⁰²	30-40 ³⁰³	75 ³⁰⁴	341-351 ³⁰⁵	12 ICR ³⁰⁶	1 ICR ³⁰⁷	160 ³⁰⁸
Switzerland	20 ³⁰⁹		12 ³¹⁰	99 ³¹¹	1 ICR ³¹²	3 ³¹³	17 ³¹⁴
United Kingdom	50 ^{*315}	*316	150 ³¹⁷	900 ³¹⁸	4 ICR ^{*319}	2 ICR ^{*320}	400 ³²¹ -425 ³²²
Total	1,394-1,654	498-591	1,023-1,105	6,613-6,633	189	197	1,840-1,912
Women and minors as % of total	21-25%		15-17%		10%	10-11%	
South-Eastern Asia							
Cambodia				1 ³²³			
Indonesia	100 ³²⁴		113 ³²⁵	800 ³²⁶	~60 ³²⁷	~54 ³²⁸	183 ³²⁹ -300 ³³⁰

Malaysia	17 ³³¹		14 ³³²	102 ³³³ -154 ³³⁴	2 ICR ³³⁵	1 ICR ³³⁶	34 ³³⁷
Philippines	1 ICR ³³⁸		1 ICR ³³⁹	100 ³⁴⁰			
Singapore	5 ICR ³⁴¹		2 ICR ³⁴²	8 ICR ³⁴³			
Total	123		130	1,011-1,063	62	55	217-334
Women and minors as % of total	12%		12-13%		19-29%	16-25%	

Eastern Asia

China	~350 ³⁴⁴		~350 ³⁴⁵	1,000 ³⁴⁶			
Japan			1-5 ³⁴⁷	5 ³⁴⁸ -9 ³⁴⁹			
South Korea				1 ³⁵⁰			
Total	~350		~351-355	1,006-1,010			
Women and minors as % of total	35%		35%				

Americas, Australia, and New Zealand

Argentina				23 ³⁵¹			
Australia	70 ³⁵² -90 ³⁵³	2 ICR ³⁵⁴	30-40 ³⁵⁵	232 ³⁵⁶	9 ³⁵⁷	1 ³⁵⁸	48 ³⁵⁹
Brazil				3 ³⁶⁰			
Canada	26 ³⁶¹	18 ³⁶²	18 ³⁶³	110-120 ³⁶⁴	2 ICR ³⁶⁵	1 ICR ³⁶⁶	19 ³⁶⁷
Chile				1 ³⁶⁸			
New Zealand			11 ³⁶⁹	12 ³⁷⁰			
Trinidad & Tobago	60 ³⁷¹		30 ³⁷²	130 ³⁷³ -250 ³⁷⁴	4 ICR ³⁷⁵	1 ICR ³⁷⁶	5 ³⁷⁷
United States	14 ³⁷⁸	2 ICR ³⁷⁹	38 ³⁸⁰	272 ³⁸¹	14 ³⁸²	4 ³⁸³	59 ³⁸⁴
Total	170-190	22	127-137	783-913	29	7	131
Women and minors as % of total	19-24%		14-17%		22%	5%	

Southern Asia

Afghanistan							385
Bangladesh	1 ICR ³⁸⁶		2 ICR ³⁸⁷	40 ³⁸⁸			25 ³⁸⁹
India	19-22 ICR ³⁹⁰		6 ³⁹¹ -8 ICR ³⁹²	67 ³⁹³ -75 ³⁹⁴		1 ICR ³⁹⁵	5 ³⁹⁶ -11 ³⁹⁷
Maldives	17 ³⁹⁸	13 ICR ³⁹⁹	12 ICR ⁴⁰⁰	61 ⁴⁰¹ -200 ⁴⁰²			
Pakistan	12 ICR ⁴⁰³		15 ICR ⁴⁰⁴	100 ⁴⁰⁵			
Sri Lanka	7 ICR ⁴⁰⁶	1 ICR ⁴⁰⁷	1 ICR ⁴⁰⁸	32 ⁴⁰⁹ -36 ⁴¹⁰		1-4 ICR ⁴¹¹	1-4 ICR ⁴¹²
Total	56-59	14	36-38	300-451		2-5	31-40
Women and minors as % of total	12-20%		8-13%			5-16%	

Sub-Saharan Africa

Kenya			2 ICR ⁴¹³	100 ⁴¹⁴			
Madagascar				3 ⁴¹⁵			

Senegal				1 ICR ⁴¹⁶			1 ICR ⁴¹⁷
Somalia				1 ICR ⁴¹⁸			
South Africa	10-15 ⁴¹⁹		7 ⁴²⁰	140 ⁴²¹ -163 ⁴²²	3 ⁴²³	1 ICR ⁴²⁴	11 ⁴²⁵
Total	10-15		9	245-268	3	1	12
Women and minors as % of total	4-6%		3-4%		25%	8%	
Global Totals							
Total all countries	6,173-6,577	798-891	6,797-6,902	44,279-52,808	1,460-1,525	604-609	7,712-8,202
Women and minors as % of total	12-15%		13-16%		18-20%	7-8%	
As a proportion of returned women and minors					22-25% of minors that were in theater have returned	9% of women that were in theater have returned	15-19% of all persons that were in theater have returned
* ICR refers to "individual cases recorded." ICRs are not comprehensive and offer little numerical value to the dataset, but they do indicate that indeed women and minors were departing from, or returning to, these countries, prompting the need for further examination.							

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