

First genocide prosecution against Islamic State opens in Germany

From the [Guardian](#)

An alleged former member of the Islamic State jihadist group went on trial in Germany on Friday on charges of genocide. The 37-year-old Iraqi, named only as Taha al-J under German privacy laws, is accused of taking part in the genocide of the Yazidi people of northern Iraq.

It is believed to be the first genocide prosecution against Isil anywhere in the world, and is the second Middle East war crimes trial to open in Germany this week, after an alleged former Syrian regime intelligence officer was charged with crimes against humanity.



Taha al-J covered his face with a file as he was led into the courtroom in Frankfurt. He is accused of deliberately chaining a five-year-old Yazidi girl and her mother in the sun in temperatures of 50C. The child died while her mother suffered severe burns.

The case is being heard by a court in Germany under the

principle of universal jurisdiction, under which war crimes and crimes against humanity can be prosecuted anywhere in the world, regardless of where they were committed.

Taha al-J's wife, a German Isis volunteer named Jennifer Wenisch, already faces prosecution in a separate trial over the girl's killing.

But prosecutors have brought additional charges of genocide against Taha al-J, alleging he was motivated by the intent to wipe out the Yazidi people.

In 2015, Al-J bought a Yazidi woman and her five-year-old daughter as slaves at an Isis base in Syria, prosecutors allege. The two had been taken as prisoners by the militants in northern Iraq at the beginning of August 2014, and had been "sold and resold several times as slaves" by the group already. After purchasing the woman and her daughter, Al-J took the two to his household in the Iraqi city of Fallujah and forced them to "keep house and to live according to strict Islamic rules," while giving them insufficient food and beating them regularly to punish them, according to the indictment.

Near the end of 2015, Al-J chained the girl to the bars of a window in the open sun on a day where temperatures reached 50C (122F) and she died from the punishment, according to the indictment. Prosecutors in the case against Al-J's wife said the punishment was carried out because the five-year-old had wet the bed.

The charges against Jennifer W are based partially on the allegation that she did nothing to help the girl. The Yazidi girl's mother, who survived captivity, testified at W's trial and is also expected to appear as a witness at the trial of Al-J, according to the court.

W (Jennifer Wenisch) grew up in Lower Saxony as a Protestant and converted to Islam in 2013. She is alleged to have made

her way to Iraq through Turkey and Syria in 2014 to join Isis. In 2015, as a member of the extremist group's "morality police," she patrolled parks in Fallujah and Mosul armed with an assault rifle and a pistol as well as an explosive vest, looking for women who did not conform with its strict codes of behaviour and dress...

Taha al-J is also accused of occupying various roles in Isil, including heading an exorcism department.

The case will hang on whether prosecutors can prove Taha al-J killed the child as part of an attempt to destroy the Yazidi as a religious and ethnic group. If found guilty of genocide, Taha al-J faces life imprisonment.