



CEP Policy Paper

***Six Years Later: A Status Update on the
Prosecution of Female Returnees in Germany***

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Executive Summary

This policy paper provides a brief update on key developments in the prosecution of women who returned to Germany after having travelled to Iraq and Syria, usually to join terrorist organizations such as the so-called Islamic State (ISIS) there.¹ It also provides a list of convicted female returnees. In the past six years, the prosecution of female returnees² in Germany has become more systematic. As of January 2024, almost 30 percent of all female returnees – at least 37 out of 129 – have received their final verdict. Several are having an appeal pending, are still on trial, awaiting their trial, or are currently being investigated, but it will likely be difficult to prosecute all female returnees. The most frequent convictions include membership in a foreign terrorist organization, violation of the war weapons control act, and failure to fulfill the duty of care and education towards their children. Others have also been convicted of war crimes against property, crimes against humanity, and war crimes against persons. While Germany has been pioneering the cumulative prosecution of counterterrorism and core international crimes, only two women have been convicted for aiding and abetting genocide and only one for sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). The longest prison sentences were pronounced against Jennifer W. (14 years), Nadine K. (nine years, three months), and Marcia M. (eight years, six months). Jennifer W. und Nadine K.’ verdicts are not yet final. The peak of prosecution was likely reached in the years 2021-2022, yet at least ten cases are still pending. Interestingly, Germany is planning another repatriation mission for a small number of women and children who remain in Northeast Syria.

Policy Recommendations

- **Repatriate all remaining German nationals from Northeast Syria and work with the respective local authorities in Iraq and Syria to issue extradition orders for those who refuse to return.** Apart from legal and humanitarian concerns, only the return of all men, women, and children to their home countries will allow for appropriate risk assessments and management of these individuals. Seven successful repatriation missions have demonstrated that the German government is capable of retrieving its citizens, including from areas not controlled by an officially recognized government. Importantly, Germany should set an example for European countries by initiating the managed return of German men.
- **Improve access to gender-disaggregated data on criminal justice responses.** Government stakeholders should introduce the collection of gender-disaggregated data and share it with researchers to enable in-depth analyses of gendered differences. The proposed reform of the German Code of Crimes against International Law (VStGB), aiming to provide interpretation during trials, would also be an important step to ensure greater accessibility of German criminal justice for an international audience.³
- **Systematically include intersecting grounds, including religion, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in charges for core international crimes.** When prosecuting, for example, crimes committed against members of the Yazidi minority, the persecution on intersecting grounds – religion and gender-based, should be included in the charges. Here, a proposal to close gaps in criminal liability for sexualized violence is a step in the right direction.⁴ The same scrutiny should be applied when prosecuting male returnees.

¹ The paper also serves as an addition to a book on the prosecution, rehabilitation, and reintegration of female violent extremist offenders published by the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (ICCT) in January 2024, to which the author contributed the country chapter on Germany; see Mehra, T., Renard, T., Herbach, M., Hecker, M., and Koller, S.: „Female Jihadis Facing Justice: Comparing Approaches in Europe,“ International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (ICCT), January 2024, <https://www.icct.nl/publication/female-jihadis-facing-justice-comparing-approaches-europe>, p.63-94.

² For a definition of “female returnees”, please see footnote 6.

³ German Parliament, “Entwurf eines Gesetzes zur Fortentwicklung des Völkerstrafrechts,” Printed Matter 20/9471, November 27, 2023, <https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/20/094/2009471.pdf>.

⁴ Ibidem.

About CEP

The Counter Extremism Project (CEP) is an international, non-profit, and non-partisan international policy organization formed to combat the growing threat from extremist ideologies. One area of focus for CEP is the analysis of responses to (returned) foreign terrorist fighters, including their prosecution, rehabilitation, and reintegration.

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CEP Resources

- CEP webinar with Sofia Koller, Helmut Grauer, and Sonka Mehner, “Sechs Jahre Strafverfolgung von IS-Rückkehrerinnen in Deutschland”, November 2, 2023: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLMgGq1NecSpaPDjxIUSl4gOskPgmGniRT>
- CEP blog series by Sofia Koller, “ISIS Women in Court,” February – September 2023: <https://www.counterextremism.com/newsfreetags/isis-women-court>
- CEP webinar with Sofia Koller, Dr. Sharon Weill, and Constance Wilhelm-Olympiou, “A Sisyphean Task? Prosecuting Returnees from Syria and Iraq in France,” May 2, 2023: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5UQZkZoY6pw&list=PLMgGq1NecSpYvhzx9fihRuPwi3QEF6Px1&pp=iAQB>
- CEP policy paper by Sofia Koller, “Prosecution of Returning Foreign Terrorist Fighters in France,” March 2023: https://www.counterextremism.com/sites/default/files/2023-03/CEP%20Policy%20Paper_Prosecution%20of%20Returnees%20from%20Syria%20and%20Iraq%20in%20France_March%202023.pdf
- CEP webinar with Sofia Koller and Tanya Mehra, “A New Momentum – The Repatriation and Prosecution of Alleged European ISIS Affiliates from Northeast Syria In 2022,” December 6, 2022: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6z7CSb70rvs&list=PLMgGq1NecSpaPcO_IsUTcuaai_eNXvNZha&pp=iAQB
- CEP webinar with Sofia Koller, Alexandra Lily Kather, and Anne-Clémentine Larroque, “Back from Raqqa: The Prosecution of Returnees in Germany and France,” October 17, 2022: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLMgGq1NecSpbPXEsZj4WhlrOlkqhGY-IR>
- CEP policy paper by Sofia Koller, “Prosecution of German Women Returning from Syria and Iraq,” October 2022: <https://www.counterextremism.com/de/content/update-prosecution-german-women-returning-syria-and-iraq>
- CEP webinar with Dr. Gina Vale and Sofia Koller, “The Fall-Out of Gendered Counterterrorism Approaches in Northeast Syria,” February 28, 2022: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ngk23Eplb7s>
- CEP report by Dr. Robert Pelzer and Mika Moeller, “Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Released Islamist Extremists in Germany,” August 2020: https://www.counterextremism.com/sites/default/files/CEP%20Report_Rehabilitation%20and%20Reintegration_Aug%202020.pdf

Context

The rise of the so-called Islamic State in Syria and Iraq (ISIS) resulted in an unprecedented mobilization of women and girls leaving their home countries in support of the terrorist organization. For example, of the more than 1,150 individuals travelling from Germany, around 25 percent were female.⁵ However, while male foreign terrorist fighters usually participated in weapons training and combat, the role of women was less clear. Considered housewives and mothers who had joined their husbands out of love and not ideological conviction, prosecutors at first disregarded them as potential members of terrorist organizations.

In Germany, the systematic prosecution of female returnees⁶ for terrorism-related offences began about six years ago, when a 2017 arrest warrant for Sibel H. was denied. A German national and Muslim convert, Sibel H. travelled to Iraq with her husband Deniz B, also a German national⁷, whom she had married according to Islamic law.⁸ From March 2016 onwards, the couple lived in different ISIS-controlled cities in Iraq before surrendering to Kurdish units in August 2017. In October 2017, the federal prosecutor of Germany (GBA) requested an arrest warrant for Sibel H. on suspicion of membership in a foreign terrorist organization, according to sections 129a and b of the German criminal code or StGB. However, this warrant was denied by the investigative judge of the Federal Court of Justice (BGH) and – even after the GBA filed a complaint – was confirmed in March 2018. The BGH found that “the daily life [...] in the ‘caliphate’ as such [did] not constitute membership activity for [ISIS]”.⁹ In April 2018, Sibel H. returned from Iraq to Germany with the Federal Criminal Police (BKA) and a few months later, her house was searched. Around one year later, Sibel H. was arrested but conditionally released. Finally, on December 6, 2019, the GBA successfully filed charges against Sibel H. for membership in a foreign terrorist organization, war crimes against property, and violations of the war weapons control act before the Higher Regional Court in Munich. With her activities and presence, the GBA argued Sibel H. had effectively strengthened the internal structure of ISIS.¹⁰ In April 2020, Sibel H. was convicted and sentenced to three years in prison. While in the end, Sibel H. was not the first female returnee charged with membership in a foreign terrorist organization, the delay around her arrest warrant highlighted the difficulties for Germany’s justice system to legally assess women’s involvement in terrorist organizations abroad. The GBA considered Sibel H. the “prototype of a Salafist who joined a terrorist organization of her own free will”¹¹ and demonstrated that the federal prosecutor was determined to prosecute her and similar German female returnees accordingly.

⁵ Koller, S.: “Prosecution of German Women Returning from Syria and Iraq,” Counter Extremism Project, October 2022, <https://www.counterextremism.com/de/content/update-prosecution-german-women-returning-syria-and-iraq>.

⁶ In the context of this paper, ‘female returnees’ refers to women who have traveled to Syria or Iraq from Germany in order to join a terrorist organization and returned after a (brief) stay. This means, for example, that Safia S. is not included since she travelled to Turkey but was brought back to Germany by her mother before being able to cross the Syrian border.

⁷ Sibel H. had already stayed in ISIS-controlled regions of Iraq between December 2013 and January 2014 with her first husband, who she had also married according to Islamic law. After her first husband’s death, she returned to Germany. See Higher Regional Court Munich, Verdict from April 29, 2020, Case Number 7 St 9/19 (4).

⁸ This term refers to a marriage that has been performed under *sharia* or Islamic law, for example in a mosque or by an imam at home, as opposed to a civil marriage performed at the registry office (*Standesamt*). If not followed by an official civil marriage, a marriage according to Islamic law is not legally recognized in Germany.

⁹ Federal Court of Justice, Decision of March 22, 2018, StB 32/17, <http://juris.bundesgerichtshof.de/cgi-bin/rechtsprechung/document.py?Gericht=bgh&Art=en&nr=83984&pos=0&anz=1>, p.9.

¹⁰ For a more detailed discussion on the legal assessment, see for example Koller, S. & Schiele, A.: “Holding Women Accountable. Prosecuting Female Returnees in Germany,” CTC Sentinel, December 2021, pp.38-52, <https://ctc.westpoint.edu/holding-women-accountable-prosecuting-female-returnees-in-germany/>.

¹¹ Diehl, J. & Schmid, F.: “Wie gefährlich ist die Frau, die schon zum zweiten Mal einen IS-Kämpfer heiratete?,” Spiegel, January 24, 2018, <https://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/fall-sibel-h-wie-gefaehrlich-sind-frauen-beim-is-a-1189009.html>.

Six years later, 37 or 28.7 percent of the more than 129 female returnees have received a final verdict before a German court.¹² This policy paper follows up on a 2021 article in the CTC Sentinel and a CEP policy paper from 2022.¹³ It focuses on key developments in the prosecution of German female returnees, especially core international crimes, as well as provides an updated list of convicted female returnees.¹⁴

Key Developments in the Prosecution of Female Returnees in Germany

Consolidation and Systematization

The most important development of the past six years has been the consolidation and systematization of the prosecution of female returnees in Germany. First, prosecution has become much more stable and predictable. With more and more returnee cases moving through the prosecutorial stages (investigation, arrest, charges, trial, sentencing, and appeal), prosecutors have significantly increased their knowledge of the general topic of returnees as well as their capacity to address specific challenges. Many cases reveal similar logics and few case constellations are completely new. In addition, an increasing amount of evidence is available, for example thanks to the structural investigations (*Strukturermittlungen*) into specific terrorist organizations such as ISIS which allow prosecutors to easily access background information, or because (convicted) returnees have testified against one another. The past six years have also witnessed a systematization of prosecutorial approaches. Investigators and prosecutors have identified good practices that have proven useful when developing their legal assessments, for example, regarding terrorist membership of female returnees as discussed above. Of course, such processes can also be observed regarding defense strategy and victim's legal representation. For example, defense lawyers have in several cases criticized what they contend is a thin evidence base for war crimes against property or the absence of crediting time spent in Kurdish-administered camps as time in detention when a sentence is decided.

Convictions

As of January 2024, at least 40 female returnees have been convicted in first instance. While the majority (37) have already received their final verdict, three cases are still pending.¹⁵ It is worth noting that very few cases have been (successfully) appealed and so far, only the cases of Jennifer W. and Lorin I. have been or will be heard by another regional court.¹⁶ The criminal offenses that are relevant in female returnees' court cases have not significantly changed in the past years.¹⁷ The three most common offenses are membership in a foreign terrorist organization, violation of the war weapons control act (Section 22a KrWaffKontrG), and failure to fulfill their duty of care or education (Section 171 StGB) towards their children. In addition, convictions for core international crimes have played an important role in the prosecution of German female returnees.

Core International Crimes: Genocide Charges

As of January 2024, there are a total of 21 cases of convictions for core international crimes among German female returnees: thirteen women have been convicted of war crimes against property (Section 9 VStGB, German Code of Crimes against International Law), seven women

¹² As of January 2024; all numbers referring to the prosecution of female returnees are based on the author's own analysis and make no claim to completeness. The number of 129 female returnees is composed of the number of female returnees according to the Federal Ministry of the Interior as reported by Southwest Broadcasting Service (SWR) and Bavarian Broadcasting Service (BR) as of May 2021 and the number of repatriated adult women in October 2021, March, October, and November 2022, see also Koller, S.: "The German Approach to Female Violent Extremist Offenders," in: Mehra T. et al 2024, p.63

¹³ Koller & Schiele 2021; Koller October 2022.

¹⁴ Based mostly on anonymized verdicts provided to the author by Federal and State prosecutor's offices; see page 12 onwards of this policy paper.

¹⁵ The cases of Jennifer W., Lorin I. and Nadine K.; see overview.

¹⁶ In Germany, a court's decision can technically be appealed indefinitely at the BGH. In practice, a second appeal is very unusual.

¹⁷ See Koller October 2022.

in eight cases of (aiding and abetting) crimes against humanity (Section 7 VStGB)¹⁸, five women of (aiding and abetting) war crimes against persons (Section 8 VStGB), and two women of aiding and abetting genocide (Section 6 VStGB). The majority have received their final verdict. While the first female returnees were charged with violations according to VStGB in 2018, convictions for aiding and abetting genocide are more recent. As of January 2024, only two female returnees have been convicted for this offense. The first case is that of Jalda A., who was convicted in July 2022 in Hamburg. Jalda A. was found guilty of, inter alia, membership in a foreign terrorist organization, aiding and abetting genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes for her role in the enslavement and abuse of a young Yazidi woman and sentenced to five years and six months in prison. Jalda A. was the first female ISIS member convicted for aiding and abetting genocide due to crimes committed against the Yazidi minority in Iraq and Syria and only the second ISIS member convicted for such crimes.¹⁹ The second case is that of Nadine K., who was convicted in June 2023 in Koblenz (pending appeal). In addition to membership in a foreign terrorist organization, Nadine K. was found guilty of, inter alia, crimes against humanity by enslavement, deprivation of liberty, and persecution, as well as aiding and abetting genocide for her abuse of an enslaved Yazidi woman. Nadine K. was sentenced to nine years and three months in prison.²⁰ In cases involving such violations of the VStGB, Yazidi survivors themselves have often been key witnesses. These victims joined the respective proceedings against female ISIS returnees as co-plaintiffs, usually represented by a handful of German lawyers with specific expertise in VStGB-cases, such as Natalie von Wistinghausen. On a political level, the German parliament recognized crimes committed against the Yazidis as genocide in January 2023.²¹

While Germany has been commended for its strong judicial response to crimes committed against the Yazidi minority, several points of critique remain. One is the lack of intersectional approaches, for example, to include sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), including rape, sexual slavery, forced marriage, and human trafficking for sexual exploitation as well as forced labor as tactics of terrorism. A recent CTED report finds that “accountability for these acts remains elusive.”²² The existing challenges that make criminal justice responses difficult include a lack of expertise within war crimes units to investigate sexual and gender-based crimes, fragmented approaches contrasting counter-terrorism with victim- and human rights-centered approaches, prosecutorial strategies that primarily focus on terrorism-related offenses, challenges of access and use of relevant evidence, and presumptions that there are higher evidentiary requirements for SGBV to be considered for international crimes. Furthermore, while mechanisms that aim to collect evidence on ISIS crimes, such as United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da’esh/ISIL (UNITAD) or the International, Independent and Impartial Mechanism on Syria (IIIM) have been assisting Western European States with prosecution of ISIS returnees, “the majority of requests for assistance and evidence-sharing from national units thus far do not specifically address SGBV or explore the potential involvement of the perpetrator within their jurisdiction in committing SGBV offences.”²³ As of January 2024, only one ISIS returnee has been convicted for SGBV in Germany (and potentially worldwide). For her role in the enslavement and abuse of several Yazidi women and girls, Sarah O. was convicted in June 2021 for, inter

¹⁸ Omaima A. has been convicted for this offense twice.

¹⁹ Clooney, A., Mehner, S., von Wistinghausen, N. & Murad, N.: “German court hands down second genocide conviction against ISIS member following enslavement and abuse of Yazidi woman in Syria,” Doughty Street, July 27, 2022, <https://www.doughtystreet.co.uk/news/german-court-hands-down-second-genocide-conviction-against-isis-member-following-enslavement>.

²⁰ Koller, S.: “ISIS Women in Court. Nadine K. – Time to Reflect?”, Counter Extremism Project, June 30, 2023, <https://www.counterextremism.com/blog/isis-women-court-nadine-k-time-reflect>.

²¹ German Parliament: “Bundestag erkennt IS-Verbrechen an Jesiden als Völkermord an,” January 19, 2023, <https://www.bundestag.de/dokumente/textarchiv/2023/kw03-de-jesiden-927032>.

²² CTED: “Towards Meaningful Accountability for Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Linked to Terrorism,” Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED), November 2023, https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/ctc/sites/www.un.org.securitycouncil.ctc/files/cted_report-sgbv_linked_to_terrorism_final.pdf, p.2.

²³ CTED 2023, p.38-39.

alia, membership in a foreign terrorist organization and religion and gender-based persecution as crimes against humanity.²⁴ ISIS persecuted Yazidis based on their religion but treated them differently according to their gender and age. Older women were enslaved, younger women and girls were chosen for sexual enslavement and forced marriage, adult men were tortured and killed, and boys were forced to convert (sometimes through sexual violence), and train as child soldiers.²⁵ Sarah O. was sentenced according to juvenile justice to six years and six months in prison. While several other female returnees have been charged and convicted for crimes against enslaved Yazidi women that were similar to those committed by Sarah O., these cases did not specifically include SGBV. The reasons include a lack of a coherent prosecutorial strategy and practice, possibly due to different units within the GBA having different approaches to addressing gender aspects in such complex cases constellations (despite these cases being very similar).²⁶ Another reason might be the fact that there are few VStGB-specialized defense lawyers in Germany and not all proceedings involve such specialists.

Sentencing

On average, female returnees have been sentenced to three years, nine months, and two weeks in prison or to probation. The women with the longest sentences are Jennifer W. (14 years in prison, pending appeal), Nadine K. (nine years and three months, pending appeal), Marcia M. (eight years and six months in prison), as well as Sarah O. and Stefanie A. (both six years and six months in prison).²⁷ However, these sentences are not indicative of the time actually served in prison. Many female returnees are released on probation after serving two thirds of their sentence, for example due to their compliant behavior, positive development in prison, and a good prognosis for their social reintegration.²⁸

Women as Networkers

Another key finding of the past six years is the importance of networks among German women before, during and after their stay in ISIS territory. An analysis of female returnees' verdicts reveals their high degree of interconnectedness. Many women from Germany had been in contact with at least one other female ISIS member before traveling to Syria or Iraq. In ISIS territory, they met in women's guest houses, attended the same German or English-language religious as well as Arabic courses or even stayed in each other's houses for various periods. For example, Nadine K. hosted several German women whose husbands were on fighting assignments, dead or who were divorced, ensuring that they were not sent to a women's guest house.²⁹ While the court could not confirm whether Nadine K. and her husband's house was an official ISIS women's guest house (a so-called *madafa*), the judges argued that this detail did not matter since their activities served the same function within the ISIS system; making sure that single ISIS women did not live on their own. Another example is a WhatsApp group, where German-speaking women discussed recipes, the weather, and prices of suicide belts.³⁰ After the territorial collapse of ISIS, many women found themselves in the same Kurdish-administered camps in Northeast Syria, in some cases as neighbors, sharing tents, and watching each other's children. After their return to Germany, many women decided to use their knowledge about other female returnees to their advantage. When questioned by police,

²⁴ Sarah O. was also convicted of crimes against humanity resulting in death by enslavement, aiding and abetting a crime against humanity by rape, deprivation of liberty of more than one week's duration, and deprivation of liberty resulting in death and with bodily injury. See case study in Koller 2022, p.14.

²⁵ Kather, A. L. & Schwarz, A.: "Intersecting Religious and Gender-Based Persecution in Yazidi Genocide Case. A Request for an Extension of Charges", Just Security, February 24, 2021, <https://www.justsecurity.org/74943/intersecting-religious-and-gender-based-persecution-in-yazidi-genocide-case-a-request-for-an-extension-of-charges/>.

²⁶ Interview with Alexander Schwarz on December 11, 2023.

²⁷ Koller; S.: "ISIS Women in Court. Marcia M. – A Tactical Admission?," Counter Extremism Project, September 2023, <https://www.counterextremism.com/blog/isis-women-court-marcia-m-tactical-admission>.

²⁸ See for example Koller 2024, p.73-74

²⁹ Koller June 2023.

³⁰ Pauly, A. & Stritzel, B.: "Frauen mit Kalaschnikows und Sprengstoff waren üblich," Bild, October 29, 2019, https://www.bild.de/politik/inland/politik-inland/isis-terrorprozess-in-bochum-frauen-mit-waffen-und-sprengstoff-waren-ueblich-65688510.bild.html?t_ref=https%3A%2F%2Ft.co%2F.

many agreed to reveal details about other women's activities with ISIS. Several have testified against other female returnees in German courts. In Nadine K.'s case, Leonora M., Derya Ö., and Nancy S. testified, incriminating her more or less.³¹

A first relevant finding of such a social network analysis among female returnees, currently prepared for publication by the author together with Alexander Schiele and Carlotta Sallach, is the centrality of individuals that have not yet been formally charged. In this context, Maya G. is the person with the highest degree of "betweenness", which makes her one of the key brokers in German female ISIS networks. A German-Bosnian from North Rhine Westphalia, Maya G. had travelled to Syria with her husband, German-Lebanese Fadi Mohammed El Kurdi (also known as Abu Mohammad Al Almani)³² and her three children in 2014 and joined ISIS. In 2018, German security agencies assessed her as a "fanatic" and categorized her as a "dangerous person" (*Gefährder*), meaning that they believed she could carry out an attack at any time.³³ Although information concerning her current whereabouts are not clear, it is believed that Maya G. has returned to Germany but has not yet been charged. The understanding of female returnees as networkers underlines the importance of a social network analysis focusing on the connection between women, considering them not only as the "wife of" but as independent actors with their own resources and objectives within extremist structures.

Gendered Differences

Finally, a full analysis of gendered differences regarding the prosecution of returnees in Germany in the past six years remains elusive. One reason is the very different roles of male and female ISIS members within the organization, which makes a legal comparison challenging.³⁴ Few German adult male returnees have been charged and convicted in the past years and no case has involved charges for crimes committed against their own children or members of the Yazidi minority.³⁵ In terms of non-German male returnees however, a crucial trial was the one against Taha Al-J., the first ISIS member worldwide convicted for, inter alia, genocide for severe abuse of two enslaved Yazidis.³⁶ Indeed, the main impediment to the prosecution of the surviving male foreign terrorist fighters in Germany is that 37 German nationals remain in detention facilities in Northeast Syria.³⁷ Among the German detainees are or were prominent ISIS members like Farid Saal, who is one of the few Germans on a UN sanctions list.³⁸ He also has a pending European arrest warrant against him and allegedly

³¹ These witnesses had mostly been invited from the prosecutor's side, while several witnesses invited by the defense were not able to be present in court. See Koller June 2023.

³² Der Spiegel: "Deutsche Terrorkämpfer: Gefangen genommene IS-Männer berichten von ihrem Leben in Rakka," October 21, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W4MrqNLRuBO>.

³³ Diehl & Eberle, L.: "NRW-Polizei überwacht elf Gefährderinnen," February 5, 2018, <https://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/nordrhein-westfalen-polizei-ueberwacht-elf-islamistische-gefaehrderinnen-a-1191464.html>.

³⁴ A first analysis of such differences, for example regarding date of return vs date of indictment, can be found here: Koller, S.: "Gendered Differences in the Prosecution of Daesh Returnees in Germany," in: Hodwitz, O. (ed.): Gender-Disaggregated Data. Regional Analyses of Criminal Justice Outcomes in Terrorism Prosecutions, NATO Centre of Excellence Defence Against terrorism, December 2022, <https://www.coedat.nato.int/publication/researches/16-GenderDisaggregatedData.pdf>, p.27-39.

³⁵ For example, German returnee Akram EL A. was convicted in first instance for membership in a foreign terrorist organization, attempted homicide, and terrorism financing in January 2023; Higher Regional Court Dusseldorf, "Urteil in dem Staatsschutzverfahren wegen Mitgliedschaft in der ausländischen terroristischen Vereinigung 'Ahrar al-Sham'," January 24, 2023, Press Release 1/2023, https://www.olg-duesseldorf.nrw.de/behoerde/presse/Archiv/Pressemitteilungen_aus_2023/20230124_PM_Urteil-A/index.php.

³⁶ Federal Court of Justice: "Bundesgerichtshof bestätigt Verurteilung wegen Völkermordes durch schwere Misshandlung zweier Jesidinnen," Press release number 11/2023, November 30, 2022, <https://juris.bundesgerichtshof.de/cgi-bin/rechtsprechung/document.py?Gericht=bgh&Art=en&Datum=Aktuell&Sort=12288&nr=132299&linked=pm&Bla nk=1>;

His wife according to Islamic law, German returnee Jennifer W., was also convicted but not for genocide.

³⁷ Koller October 2022, p.6.

³⁸ United Nations Security Council: "Fared Saal," June 2, 2023, https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/sanctions/1267/aq_sanctions_list/summaries/individual/fared-saal.

committed war crimes.³⁹ In November 2019, Saal reportedly managed to escape from Kurdish detention, together with 800 other men.⁴⁰ Despite the risk of escape, there are still no publicly known efforts of the German government to repatriate these German nationals. The situation is different concerning individuals detained in Iraq, who can be deported after having served (part of) their sentence. In December 2022, German national Deniz B. returned to Germany from Erbil, Iraqi Kurdistan, and was arrested upon arrival.⁴¹ He is currently standing trial on charges of terrorist membership and war crimes against property in Frankfurt. The charge of war crimes against property is the first for a male returnee in Germany. Apart from this case, the lack of prosecution of male ISIS members for core international crimes remains striking – especially considering the role that German men have played in the genocide against the Yazidi community.

Conclusion and Remaining Challenges

This updated analysis of the prosecution of female returnees in Germany demonstrates that criminal justice responses to this group have evolved significantly in the past six years. Besides a reconceptualization of the charge “membership in a foreign terrorist organization” and the prosecution of core international crimes, including those committed against Yazidis, the court cases have also highlighted the network aspect of female ISIS members from Germany and persistent gendered differences.

When comparing the number of charges and convictions of female returnees per year, the peak in prosecutions has likely been reached in 2021 and 2022 (Figure 1).⁴² This means that

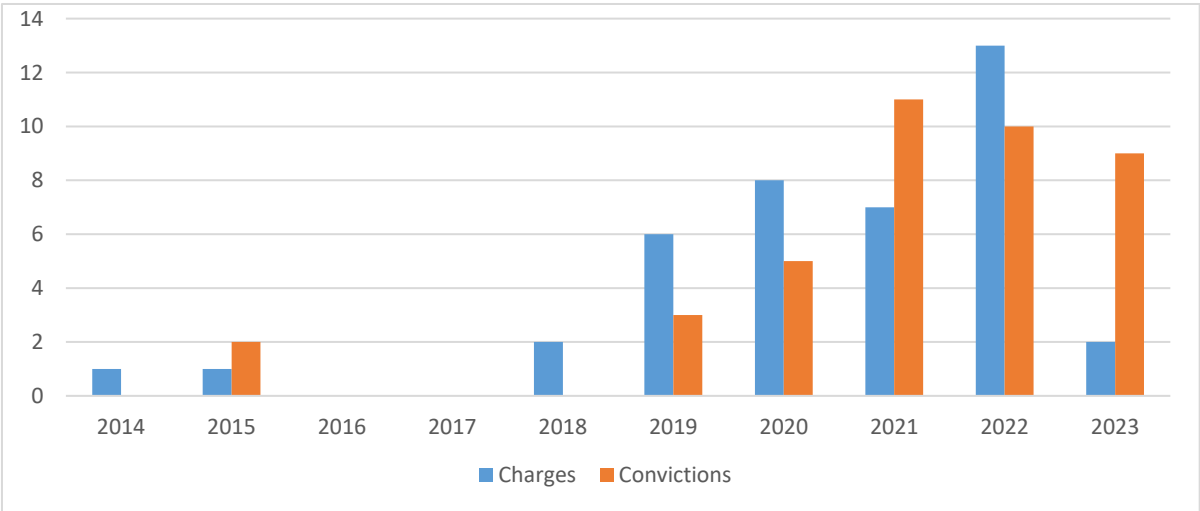


Figure 1: Number of Charges and Convictions of Female Returnees in Germany per Year (n=40)

the majority of potential judicial cases of female returnees has probably already been processed. In addition to the general challenge of accessing evidence⁴³ in returnee cases, there are several additional reasons for this assessment. As mentioned above, at least 129 women have returned to Germany. However, women who returned before the 2018 turning

³⁹ Jansen, F.: “Deutsche Dschihadisten. Der IS-Mann, der von Reue spricht,” Tagesspiegel, February 18, 2019, <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/der-is-mann-der-von-reue-spricht-4627021.html>.

⁴⁰ Radio Bonn: “IS-Terrorist verschwunden,” November 12, 2019, <https://www.radiobonn.de/artikel/is-terrorist-verschwunden-399629.html>.

⁴¹ Koller, S., Post on X, December 21, 2022, X, https://twitter.com/sofia_koller/status/1605612181713588224.

⁴² The figure includes 40 cases of 39 convicted female returnees, since Oaima A. had been charged and convicted twice. In the case of Jennifer W., only the conviction in the second instance was included.

⁴³ See Koller October 2022, p.15

point, had often not been a priority for security agencies at the time and the longer ago the possible offense was committed, the more difficult it is to prosecute. While there are no official statistics regarding ongoing investigations against female returnees, open-source material suggests that at least ten women are either awaiting trial or are currently being investigated. In addition, after its technically latest repatriation from Kurdish-administered camps in Syria in November 2022, the German Foreign Office (AA) had announced that a two-digit number of German women and children remained.⁴⁴ At the time, they reportedly did not wish to be repatriated but according to an expert interviewed in November 2023, less than half a dozen German women and their children are reportedly expected to be repatriated by the AA from Northeast Syria.⁴⁵ Apparently, these women have changed their minds and want to return to Germany. They will likely have investigations pending against them.

As of January 2024, many female returnees are already serving their prison sentence or have been released. Beside the prosecution of the remaining cases, the main challenge will be their rehabilitation, disengagement, and reintegration into society. Actors involved in such efforts report that most female returnees “seem to respond rather well to rehabilitation and disengagement offers” but that challenges around mental health issues, separation from their children, and processing their wrongdoing remain.⁴⁶ According to the German government, a total of 107 returnees has been convicted as of December 2022.⁴⁷ However, like many figures provided by federal and state government officials, this figure does not differentiate between men and women. One of the main challenges when researching criminal justice responses to women, especially those involved in extremism and terrorism, indeed remains access to relevant gender disaggregated data.

⁴⁴ Koller, S., Sallach, C. & Schiele, A.: “Recent Legal and Political Developments in the Repatriation of European Nationals from Northeastern Syria,” Counter Extremism Project, December 2022.

https://www.counterextremism.com/sites/default/files/2022-12/CEP%20Policy%20Paper_Recent%20Repatriation%20of%20Europeans%20from%20Syria_Dec%202022.pdf.

⁴⁵ Interview with Expert on November 6, 2023.

⁴⁶ Koller 2024, p.85

⁴⁷ In addition, preliminary proceedings were initiated against 310 returnees, 133 procedures are ongoing, and 70 were terminated; see German Parliament, “Antwort der Bundesregierung,” Printed Matter 20/5589, February 7, 2023, <https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/20/055/2005589.pdf>.

Overview of Convictions of German Female Returnees⁴⁸

	Name/Case No.	Conviction	Sentence	Date charged – convicted	Background
1	Karolina R./6 StS 3/14	- Support of a foreign terrorist organization	3 years and 9 months (prison)	Sept 17, 2014 – June 24, 2015	German-Polish national who travelled to Syria in May 2013 together with her husband according to Islamic law, their son and her brother. She returned to Germany after some weeks to buy equipment before travelling again in October 2013, bringing with her the equipment to be used for propaganda videos as well as more than € 5,000. After finally returning to Germany in December 2013, Karolina R. supported ISIS with several money transfers, totaling more than € 6,000. ⁴⁹
2	Andrea B./2 KLS 111 Js 139461/14	- Abduction of minors - Acquitted of preparing a serious act of state threatening violence	1 year and 6 months (probation)	Jan 26, 2015 – Feb 25, 2015	German national who took her two underage daughters against the wishes of their father to Syria in early 2014. Andrea B. became the second wife of a Jabhat Al Nusra fighter and had access to weapons of war in her home. She lived in various locations until her voluntary return to Germany in May 2014.
3	Jennifer W./8 St 9/18	1 st instance: - Membership in a foreign terrorist organization - Aiding and abetting attempted murder - Aiding and abetting an attempted crime against humanity in the form of killing a person - Aiding and abetting an attempted war crime against persons in the form of killing of a person who is to be protected under international law - Crimes against humanity by enslavement, in one case leading to death	1 st instance: 10 years (prison) 2 nd instance: 14 years (prison)	Dec 13, 2018 – Oct 25, 2021 and Aug 29, 2023	German national who travelled to join ISIS in summer 2014. Jennifer W. lived in Syria and Iraq, partly in female guest houses, and had a short-lived first marriage with an ISIS member before marrying an Iraqi ISIS fighter with whom she had a daughter. She took care of the household and received monthly allowances. For several weeks during summer 2015, the couple exploited an enslaved Yazidi woman and her daughter. The husband regularly beat them and once punished the five-year-old girl by tying her to the grid of a window in the midday sun, which led to her death. Jennifer W. was found guilty of not having intervened. ⁵⁰

⁴⁸ As of January 2024.

⁴⁹ Karolina R. was arrested on March 31, 2014.

⁵⁰ Charges in relation to a potential membership in the female-only religious police unit (*hisbah*) were dropped during the trial.

		<p>2nd instance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A crime against humanity by enslavement, leading to death <p>Pending appeal</p>			
4	Sabine Ulrike Sch./5 - 2 StE 11/18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Membership in a foreign terrorist organization - A war crime against property - Violation of the war weapons control act (exercise of actual control) - Violation of the weapons act (unlawful possession of a semi-automatic handgun) 	5 years (prison)	Dec 20, 2018 – July 5, 2019	German national who travelled to Syria in December 2013, where she married an ISIS fighter and had two children with him. Sabine S. took care of the household, lived in a looted house and received monthly allowances. She ran two popular German-language public blogs consecutively, in which she glorified life with ISIS and recommended emigrating and joining ISIS. She attended ten executions as an ISIS representative, had access to several weapons (including weapons of war) and repeated weapons training. Her husband according to Islamic law was an ISIS military leader or <i>emir</i> of Homs, Tal Afar, and Mosul and later an ISIS military emir of Iraq. After living in various locations in Syria and Iraq, she surrendered in mid-2017 to Iraqi Kurdish forces, and returned with her children to Germany in April 2018.
5	Mine K./2 StE 2/19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Membership in a foreign terrorist organization - A war crime against property 	3 years and 9 months (prison)	April 5, 2019 – Dec 4, 2019	German national who, prior to her joining ISIS, was very active as the moderator of various Islamist-Salafist online groups and the association "Key to Paradise". She left Germany with her son (without his father's permission) in February 2015 to join her husband according to Islamic law, a prominent German Jihadist from Herford, in Turkey. Mine K. arrived in Syria in March 2015, carrying around € 8,000. Her husband registered Mine K. and her son on an ISIS registration list. While her husband worked as an ISIS fighter and later emir of different battalions (military units comprised of a few hundred men, called <i>khatibas</i>), Mine K. took care of the household and received a monthly allowance from ISIS. In Tal Afar, the couple lived in a house that ISIS had appropriated. After her husband's death, Mine K. managed to travel to Turkey with her son in October 2016, where she was incarcerated for membership in a terrorist organization and sentenced to one year of probation. She and her son returned to Germany in October 2018.

6	Perihan S./ 7 StS 3/19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support of a foreign terrorist organization - Violation of the prohibition of provisions of the Foreign Trade and Payments Act⁵¹ - Terrorism financing 	4 years and 6 months (prison)	April 12, 2019 – June 16, 2021	German national who supported her sons, who were ISIS members in Syria, between October 2013 and mid-2015. Perihan S. travelled with them to Syria several times between October and November 2013. Together with her former husband, she agreed for her sons in Syria to order relevant equipment online (including parts for weapons and ammunition), have it delivered to her home in Germany and smuggle it across the Turkish-Syrian border. After the couple were prohibited to leave Germany in 2014, they supported their sons with money transfers.
7	Derya Ö./5 StS 2/19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Membership in a foreign terrorist organization - War crimes against property - Violation of the war weapons control act (exercise of actual control) - Charges of another war crime against property dropped 	2 years and 9 months (prison)	May 9, 2019 – Dec 17, 2019	German national who travelled to Syria to marry a German ISIS fighter (whom she had met online) in February 2014 in front of an ISIS <i>sharia</i> court. The couple received a monthly allowance and had one son in Iraq. Derya Ö. was instructed in the use of firearms, including an AK 47, by her husband according to Islamic law who worked for the ISIS secret police and trained other fighters. For around three weeks, Derya Ö. was married to another ISIS fighter and emir of a <i>khatiba</i> , before divorcing and returning to her first husband. In spring 2016, Derya Ö.'s husband was accused of being a spy, and was reportedly executed by ISIS. With her son, she fled to Turkey, and remained there between October and December 2016 before returning to Syria. In February 2017, Derya Ö. crossed into Turkey, was detained and then deported to Germany in August 2017.
8	Sarah O./7 StS 3/19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Membership in a foreign terrorist organization - A crime against humanity leading to death by enslavement - A crime against humanity by persecution - Aiding and abetting a crime against humanity by rape - Deprivation of liberty of more than one week duration, - Deprivation of liberty leading to death - Bodily harm 	6 years and 6 months (prison)	April 12, 2019 – June 16, 2021	German-Algerian national who as a minor travelled to Syria in October 2013, where she married a German ISIS member. Together with her husband according to Islamic law, Sarah O. hosted ISIS newcomers and single women in their flat in Jarabulus in 2014 and tried to convince others to join them in Syria. The couple had three daughters and later lived in Raqqa and Mayadin. Between 2015-2017, the couple exploited seven Yazidi women, including two minors, as slaves. Sarah O. abused them physically and her husband raped at least two of them, which Sarah O. encouraged by demanding they prepare themselves for sexual intercourse.

⁵¹ According to Sections 17 and 18 Außenwirtschaftsgesetz (AWG, Foreign Trade and Payments Act).

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Charges for war crimes against property were dropped <p>Juvenile justice</p>			<p>One of the Yazidi girls died due to the bombing of the street where she was driven by Sarah O.'s husband (who was not or not severely injured). Like her husband, Sarah O. had been aware of that risk. In early 2018, Sarah O. was detained by Turkish forces on the Syria-Turkey border and sentenced to six years and three months for terrorist membership and document forgery. After seven months in prison, she was returned to Germany in September 2018.</p>
9	Carla-Josephine S./7 StS 4/19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Membership in a foreign terrorist organization - Serious child abduction - Child abduction resulting in death - Failure to fulfill her duty of care or education - War crimes against persons (integration of a child under 15 years of age into an armed group in the context of a non-international armed conflict) - Violation of the war weapons control act (exercise of actual control) 	5 years and 3 months (prison)	Oct 9, 2019 – April 29, 2020	<p>German national who travelled to ISIS territory with her three children against their father's wishes in October 2015. Carla-Josephine S. at first stayed in a women's guest house and attended a <i>sharia</i> course. She tried unsuccessfully to convince her husband to join her and their children in Syria before marrying two ISIS fighters consecutively. In May 2017, she had another daughter with one of them. Carla-Josephine S. received a monthly allowance from ISIS, had access to at least one hand grenade and for a few weeks was a member of the ISIS female-only military unit Khatiba Nusaybah, acting as a driver. She also agreed twice for her 6 and then 7-year-old son to receive paramilitary training. In December 2018, he allegedly died during a bombing. In January 2019, she was caught trying to cross into Turkey and was returned to Germany with her children in April 2019.</p>
10	Sibel H./7 St 9/19 (4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Membership in a foreign terrorist organization - War crimes against property - Violation of the war weapons control act (exercise of actual control) - Charges for her first travel to Syria in 2013 were dropped 	3 years (prison)	Dec 6, 2019 – April 29, 2020	<p>German national who left Germany to join her husband according to Islamic law in ISIS territory in December 2013. In January 2014, after his death, Sibel H. briefly returned to Germany, where she enjoyed the positive attention as a "martyr's wife". In March 2016, she traveled to Syria with her second husband according to Islamic law, and took € 7,000 with her. During her husband's ideological and military training, Sibel H. stayed in a women's guest house and received allowances from ISIS. The couple moved to Iraq and lived in a house looted by ISIS from its original owners in Iraq. While her husband worked as an ISIS fighter, Sibel H. took care of the household and in November 2016, had a son. In August 2017, the couple surrendered to Kurdish forces and were incarcerated in Erbil, where Sibel H. had another son. In April 2018, she was returned to Germany.</p>

11	Nadia B./ 8 – 1/21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Membership in a foreign terrorist organization - Violation of the war weapons control act (exercise of actual control) - Abduction of minors - Failure to fulfill her duty of care or education - Fraud - Tax evasion 	3 years and 4 months (prison)	March 22, 2021 – July 16, 2021	German national who travelled to Syria with her three-year-old daughter – against the will of her father – in December 2014. Nadia B. married two ISIS fighters consecutively and took care of the household. She educated her daughter and her two sons, born in Syria, according to ISIS ideology and allowed her daughter to be traumatized by exposure to war and her stepfather's harsh educational methods. During her time in Syria, Nadia B. continued to receive social and child welfare from Germany. She returned – pregnant with her fourth child – to Germany in April 2019.
12	Omaima A./3 St 1/20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Membership in a foreign terrorist organization - Failure to fulfill her duty of care or education - Violation of the war weapons control act (exercise of actual control) - Aiding and abetting a crime against humanity (enslavement) - Deprivation of liberty 	3 years and 6 months (prison)	March 6, 2020 – Oct 2, 2020	German-Tunisian national who traveled to Syria in January 2015 with her three underage children, her brother-in-law, and her first husband. After his death, Omaima A. married Denis Cuspert ("Abu Talha Al Almani"), possibly the most famous German ISIS member and an ISIS propagandist. ⁵² Omaima A. lived in an ISIS women's guest house and received a widow's allowance. She took care of the household and educated her children according to ISIS ideology, allowing her older daughter to attend an ISIS school and dressing her son in camouflage clothing and headgear bearing ISIS symbols. Omaima A. was the co-administrator of two Facebook channels called "Hijra to Syria" and "Life of a Muhajira". She promoted life in the 'caliphate' and encouraged other women to travel to join ISIS via email. She also had her own gun and tried to register for armed combat together with German Sarah O. Omaima A. also allowed a thirteen-year-old enslaved Yazidi girl to clean her house. Omaima A. and her children left ISIS territory in April 2016 and returned to Germany in September 2016.

⁵² Until January 2022, Denis Cuspert was sanctioned by the United Nations Security Council; United Nations: "Security Council ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee Removes 5 Entries from Its Sanctions List," Press Release Security Council, SC/14758, January 4, 2022, <https://press.un.org/en/2022/sc14758.doc.htm>.

13	Lorin I./5 StS 1/20 bzw. 4 StS 1/21	- Membership in a foreign terrorist organization - Violation of the war weapons control act (exercise of actual control) 2 nd instance trial pending	1 year and 9 months (probation)	April 3, 2020 – Aug 20, 2020	German-Syrian national who travelled to Syria with her second husband according to Islamic law in December 2014. While her husband worked as an ISIS fighter, led prayers in a mosque, and stied to become a judge, Lorin I. took care of the household and their two children. The couple was provided a monthly allowance and a house by ISIS. Lorin I. lived in a female guest house, tried to convince her husband's sister, a minor, to join them and once had access to weapons of war. After the couple started to distance themselves from ISIS, Lorin I.'s husband was detained and died in a bombing. Lorin I. re-married and had twins in April 2019. She fled to Turkey, was detained in November 2019 and was deported to Germany with her children one month later.
14	Elina F./8 St 1/20	- Membership in a foreign terrorist organization	2 years (probation)	Apr 30, 2020 – Sept 9, 2020	German national who left Germany in late summer 2013 together with another woman, joining her first husband according to Islamic law. He had travelled a few months earlier and had participated in combat training with an ISIS-related group in Syria. In January 2014, Elina F. participated in the production of ISIS propaganda while staying at a women's guest house. After her first husband died in June 2014, she gave birth to her first child, lived in several places, including women's guest houses in Raqqa, and received ideological training before re-marrying another ISIS member, with whom she had a child and received monthly allowances. In February 2018, Elina F. was captured by Kurdish forces and was repatriated to Germany in January 2020.
15	Lisa R./4 StE 6 OJs 9/19	- Membership in a foreign terrorist organization	2 years (probation)	May 27, 2020 – March 4, 2021	German national who travelled to Syria in September 2014 together with her German husband according to Islamic law and his sister, Sarah B. Lisa R. married four more ISIS fighters and had three children. When her husbands died, she received widow's allowances from ISIS. Lisa R. was captured by Kurdish forces in early 2019, transferred to Turkey in January 2020, and deported to Germany in January 2020.

16	Zeynep G./6 – 2/20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Membership in a foreign terrorist organization - Violation of the war weapons control act (exercise of actual control) - Acquitted of a war crime against property 	2 years and 10 months (prison)	Aug 10, 2020- April 23, 2021	German national who traveled to Syria in October 2014 to join ISIS and marry an ISIS fighter. Zeynep G. took care of the household, received a monthly allowance from ISIS and tried to recruit her former superior from her job in Germany. When her husband died, she re-married another ISIS fighter who gave her a Kalashnikov rifle as a wedding gift and instructed her in its use. In early 2019, she was detained by Kurdish forces and managed to flee. Later, Zeynep G. was captured by Turkish forces and in May 2020, was deported to Germany.
17	Nasim A./5-2 OJs 24/19 - 4/20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Membership in a foreign terrorist organization - A war crime against property, - Violation of the war weapons control act (exercise of actual control) <p>Juvenile justice</p>	2 years (probation)	Sept 18, 2020 – May 28, 2021	German national who travelled to Syria as a minor in December 2014, where she married a German ISIS fighter. Nasim A. took care of the household and took care of her husband according to Islamic law when he was severely wounded. The couple lived in a house in Tal Afar provided by ISIS and had access to an AK-47. After more than four years with ISIS, she surrendered to Kurdish forces in March 2019. She managed to flee to Turkey and was deported to Germany in November 2019.
18	Nurten J./III-7 Sts 2/20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Membership in a foreign terrorist organization - Failure to fulfill her duty of care or education - War crimes against property - Violation of the war weapons control act (exercise of actual control) - Violation of the weapons act (unlawful possession and unlawful carrying of a semi-automatic handgun) - Aiding and abetting a crime against humanity (enslavement) - Deprivation of liberty lasting more than one week - Acquitted of another war crime against property 	4 years and 3 months (prison)	Nov 2, 2020 – April 21, 2021	German national who travelled to Syria with her three-year old daughter and a friend in February 2015, where she joined ISIS and married a German ISIS fighter. The couple lived in Raqqa and Mayadin, were provided accommodations looted by ISIS and had a son together. Nurten J. took care of the household and of her children, as well as the son of her husband's second wife (who had left ISIS territory). Nurten J. also exploited a Yazidi woman who had been enslaved by the German couple Sarah O. and Ismail S. After being captured by Kurdish forces in February 2019, Nurten J. managed to get herself smuggled to Turkey, from where she was returned to Germany in July 2020.

19	Fadia S./7 StS 3/20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Membership in a foreign terrorist organization - A war crime against property - Failure to fulfill her duty of care or education - Acquitted of another war crime against property 	4 years (prison)	Dec 22, 2020 – July 1, 2021	German-Lebanese national who travelled to Syria with her four children to join her husband in April 2015. While her husband worked as an ISIS fighter and served as a point of contact for (potential) foreign terrorist fighters, especially from Germany, Fadia S. took care of the household, educated their children according to ISIS ideology, and hosted the guests her husband received as an ISIS contact point for foreigners. The couple lived in accommodations provided by ISIS. She participated in a one-month-long <i>sharia</i> course, sent a propaganda video and hosted (German) women, including the wives of the prominent Demir-brothers from Germany. ⁵³ Fadia S. managed to flee with her children to Turkey and organized her return to Germany in February 2018.
	Omaima A. (see no.12)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Membership in a foreign terrorist organization - Aiding and abetting a crime against humanity (enslavement) - A second charge of membership in a foreign terrorist organization in conjunction with violation of the war weapons control act was dropped. 	4 years (prison) ⁵⁴	March 2021 – July 22, 2021	During Omaima A.'s trial in 2020, new details regarding her terrorist membership surfaced that led to a second trial. Omaima A. was as convicted a second time for her role in the abuse of two enslaved Yazidi women, whom she let clean her apartment in Raqqa in 2016 (For a full case summary, see no.12).

⁵³ Yusuf Demir (ISIS media official with links to ISIS networks in the Middle East and Europe) and Ömer Demir (ISIS external operations coordinator with links to ISIS networks in the Middle East and Europe) from North Rhine Westphalia have reportedly been killed by an air strike in Iraq in 2017; U.S. Department of Defense: "Coalition Airstrikes Kill 4 Senior ISIS Leaders," Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve News, November 14, 2017, <https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/1371614/coalition-airstrikes-kill-4-senior-isis-leaders/>.

⁵⁴ Omaima A.'s first sentence of three years and six months had been taken into account.

20	Kim Teresa A./5 – 2 OJs 29/20 – 1/21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Membership in a foreign terrorist organization - War crimes against property - Violation of the war weapons control act (exercise of actual control) 	4 years (prison)	March 15, 2021 – Oct 29, 2021	<p>German national who travelled together with her husband according to Islamic law to Syria in June 2014. While her husband worked as an ISIS fighter, Kim Teresa A. took care of the household and looked after him when he was sick. Until July 2016, the couple lived in various locations, including in accommodations provided by ISIS, and received financial allowances. Kim Teresa A. owned two AK-47s and was able to use them. Together with other foreign women, she also ran two chatgroups to promote the life in the 'caliphate' and denounced a woman who had criticized ISIS. In August 2016, she left ISIS territory and lived in Syria before crossing into Turkey and returning to Germany in October 2020.</p>
21	Leonora M./	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Membership in a foreign terrorist organization - Violation of the war weapons control act (exercise of actual control) - Violation of the weapons act - Acquitted of aiding and abetting a crime against humanity <p>Juvenile justice</p>	2 years (probation)	July 7, 2021 - May 18, 2022	<p>German national who travelled to Syria in March 2015 and joined ISIS, after having married an ISIS member active in the intelligence unit. Until June 2017, Leonora M. lived in Raqqa, participated in religious training, had access to weapons (including weapons of war) and took care of the household. While her husband had enslaved a Yazidi woman, the woman did not stay in Leonora M.'s house. Leonora M. surrendered to Kurdish forces in January 2019 and returned to Germany in December 2020. She was also accused of having worked for the ISIS intelligence unit and spying on other women.</p>
22	Daniela G./3 St 1/21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Membership in a foreign terrorist organization - Charges for failure to fulfill her duty of care or education dropped <p>Juvenile justice</p>	2 years and 9 months (prison)	Oct 1, 2021 – Dec 7, 2021	<p>German-Ghanaian national who travelled to Syria in September 2014, together with four other women. Her husband according to Islamic law had already gone there. Daniela G. was at times the driving force behind the plan. While her husband worked as an ISIS fighter, Daniela G. took care of the household and educated her two children born in Syria according to ISIS ideology. She also took a picture with a Kalashnikov rifle. In early 2019, the couple surrendered to Kurdish forces in Baghouz. While her husband died in Kurdish detention in 2020, Daniela G. she spent one year in Al Hol camp, then escaped with her children to Turkey. She was expelled and returned to Germany in May 2020.</p>

23	Stefanie A./3 St 2/21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Membership in a foreign terrorist organization - A war crime against persons (integration of a child soldier) - Involuntary manslaughter - Failure to fulfill her duty of care or education - Acquitted of membership in a foreign terrorist organization (Jund al Aqsa), a war crime against persons, failure to fulfill her duty of care or education, and a violation of the weapons act 	6 years and 6 months (prison)	Oct 21, 2021 – March 24, 2022	<p>German national who travelled to Syria in August 2016 with her then 14-year-old son, following her husband. After staying in a women's guest house in territory controlled by Jund al Aqsa, she arrived in Raqqa at the end of 2016 and joined ISIS. The couple integrated their son into ISIS structures as a child soldier. He underwent military training and participated in combat, before dying during a bombing in February 2018. Stefanie A. took care of the household and tried to convince her older son to join them in ISIS territory. The couple surrendered to Kurdish forces in February 2019. In October 2020, Stefanie A. smuggled herself out of Al Hol camp and into Turkey. She was returned to Germany in March 2021.</p>
24	Romiena S./4 StS 3/21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support and membership in a foreign terrorist organization - Severe abduction of minors - Failure to fulfill her duty of care or education - Aiding and abetting a crime against humanity (enslavement) - Endorsement of criminal acts 	3 years and 3 months (prison)	Dec 27, 2021 – June 1, 2022	<p>German national who travelled together with her daughter and a 16-year-old girl to Syria in December 2014. Romiena S. was planning to marry an ISIS fighter who was already in Syria and supported their travels. After staying in a women's guest house, she became the second wife of the fighter and took care of the household. After his death in September 2015, she had twins (one of whom died shortly after birth) and was supported financially by ISIS as a martyr's wife. She married two other ISIS fighters consecutively, had another son, and took care of the household. Romiena S. educated her daughter according to ISIS ideology, for example showing her propaganda videos of executions and taking her to a stoning. She convinced her mother to convert and tried to bring her to Syria. In 2017, while staying with a friend, Romiena S. exploited a Yazidi slave. In March 2019, she surrendered to Kurdish forces and with her children, was repatriated to Germany in October 2021.</p>

25	Verena M./7StS 2/22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Membership in a foreign terrorist organization - Abduction of minors - Failure to fulfill her duty of care or education - Violation of the war weapons control act (exercise of actual control) 	3 years and 6 months (prison)	Feb 7, 2022 – July 26, 2022	German national who took her 6-year-old son against his father's will to Syria in June or July 2015, where she joined ISIS. Her husband according to Islamic law followed later and worked as an ISIS fighter. The couple had two children together and received monthly allowances from ISIS. Verena M. took care of the household and educated her son according to ISIS ideology. She had access to weapons of war, lived in a flat in Raqqa provided by ISIS and tried to raise funds from Germany. The couple surrendered to Kurdish forces in January 2019 and with her children, Verena M. was repatriated to Germany in October 2021.
26	Solale M./4 St 1/22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Membership in a foreign terrorist organization - Severe abduction of minors - Failure to fulfill her duty of care or education 	3 years (prison)	Feb 23, 2022 – June 2, 2022	German-Iranian national who took her three-year-old daughter and her 11-months-old son to Syria in June 2014 (without informing the daughter's father) to join her husband according to Islamic law. The couple then joined ISIS and lived in various cities in Syria and Iraq. While her husband fought and worked in an ISIS hospital, Solale M. took care of the household and her daughter. She participated in an Arabic language and a <i>sharia</i> course, sent her daughter for some weeks to an ISIS school and wore an AK-47 in public on two occasions. She also tried to convince her friend to join them in the 'caliphate'. Solale M. allegedly refused to join the Khatiba Nusaybah when asked by a member she knew. Together with her children, she was detained by Kurdish forces in late 2017 and was repatriated to Germany in October 2021.
27	Jalda A./3 St 2/22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Membership in a foreign terrorist organization - A war crime against property - A war crime against humanity - Aiding and abetting genocide (infliction of significant emotional harm) - A crime against humanity (enslavement and severe deprivation of liberty) - Aiding and abetting a crime against humanity (rape and infliction of significant emotional harm) 	5 years and 6 months (prison)	March 18, 2022 – July 27, 2022	German national who followed her brother to Syria in April 2014, together with her sister-in-law. She married consecutively three ISIS fighters (including prominent German members Farid S. and Emre Yunus S.) and had two children. In Tal Abyad, she lived in a looted house as well as women's guest houses. She and her husband according to Islamic law, Emre S., lived with an enslaved Yazidi woman who they exploited. Jalda A. beat her, and the husband raped her. After being detained by Kurdish forces in December 2017, Jalda A. was repatriated together with her children to Germany in October 2021.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aiding and abetting a war crime against persons (inhumane treatment and rape) - Bodily harm and grievous bodily harm - Acquitted of other genocide-related charges and torture 			
28	Laura H./5-2 StE 7/22 - 7 - 2/22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Membership in a foreign terrorist organization - Failure to fulfill her duty of care or education - Violation of the prohibition of provisions of the Foreign Trade and Payments Act 	2 years (probation)	May 3, 2022 – July 17, 2023	German national who, after a first stay with her husband according to Islamic law in Egypt, traveled with her two sons to Syria in May 2016 and joined ISIS. In July 2016, she reunited with her husband Ahmed D., who had been in Syria since autumn 2014. While her husband fought for ISIS and worked in ISIS administration, Laura H. took care of the household and their children, sold homemade desserts, attended a religious course (<i>aqida</i>), and an information event of the Khatiba Nusaybah. She also organized, together with Ahmed D. and another person, the transfer of more than € 27,000 from Germany to Syria for ISIS. After her husband's death, Laura H. married another ISIS fighter. At the end of 2018, Laura H. was detained by Kurdish forces and was repatriated to Germany in November 2019.
29	Sarah B./2 StE 6 OJs 5/20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Membership in a foreign terrorist organization - Acquitted of violation of the war weapons control act <p>Juvenile justice</p>	2 years (probation)	May 25, 2022 – Nov 17, 2022	German national who travelled to Syria with her sister, her brother and his wife (Lisa R.) in September 2014. Sarah B. married four ISIS members consecutively and had a daughter with her first husband. She lived in ISIS women's guest houses in between her marriages and received financial compensation for widows. She took care of the household, took part in a German-language religious course, and praised the life in the 'caliphate' online. In February 2019, she was detained by Kurdish forces and was repatriated to Germany in March 2022.

30	Josephine Mandy B./ 6 – 1/22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Membership in a foreign terrorist organization - Failure to fulfill her duty of care or education - Tax evasion - Not convicted on charges of war crimes against property 	2 years and 9 months (prison)	May 24, 2022 – Dec 12, 2022	German national who travelled together with her two minor sons to Syria in October 2016. There, Josephine Mandy B. joined her husband according to Islamic law, who was already fighting for ISIS. She took care of the household, educated her sons according to ISIS ideology and had a daughter. While abroad, she continued to receive child benefits from the German state. In December 2018, Josephine Mandy B. surrendered to Kurdish forces and lived with her sons in a camp in Syria. In October 2021, she was repatriated to Germany.
31	Monika K./III-6 StS 3/22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Membership in a foreign terrorist organization - A war crime against property <p>Juvenile justice</p>	3 years and 6 months (prison)	Aug 9, 2022 – Feb 14, 2023	German-Polish national who travelled to Syria at the end of 2013 and joined ISIS in February 2014. She married several ISIS fighters and had one child. Monika K. took care of the household and her daughter. In Iraq, she and her husband according to Islamic law moved into an empty house provided by ISIS. Monika K. also produced propaganda on social media and raised funds for detained ISIS members in Kurdish camps. Monika K. was detained by Kurdish forces in March 2019 but smuggled herself out of the camp and married a Syrian smuggler and alleged ISIS member in Idlib. In September 2020, she was rearrested by the Free Syrian Army (FSA) and deported to Germany together with her child.
32	Emilie R.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Membership in a foreign terrorist organization <p>Juvenile justice</p>	3 years (prison)	August 11, 2022 – Dec 8, 2022	German national who travelled with her husband according to Islamic law to Syria in July 2014. While her husband fought for ISIS, Emilie R. took care of the household and educated their children, receiving allowances from ISIS. Together with her husband, she also received weapons training with the aim of fighting for ISIS if needed. The couple also declared themselves willing to commit a suicide attack in Germany. Emilie R. tried to entice women and girls in Germany to travel to Syria and marry ISIS fighters. She was detained by Kurdish forces in early 2019 before being repatriated to Germany in March 2022.

33	Gülseren T./1 OJs 1/22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Membership in a foreign terrorist organization - Acquitted of war crimes against property <p>Juvenile justice</p>	2 years (probation)	Aug 11, 2022 - Dec 14, 2022	German national who traveled as a minor to Syria in December 2014. There, Gülseren T. registered with ISIS in a women's guest house and received ideological and Arabic language training, married a German-Tunisian ISIS fighter, took care of the household, and had three children. In March 2019, she was detained by Kurdish forces and was repatriated to Germany in March 2022.
34	Fatiha B./8-2 OJs 6/22 - 1/22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Membership in two foreign terrorist organizations - Failure to fulfill her duty of care or education 	2 years (probation)	Aug 18, 2022 – March 24, 2023	German-Moroccan national who travelled to Syria together with her husband in September 2013, joining Jabhat al Nusra. Fatiha B. took care of the household and her daughter who was born in February 2014. She also aided in the dispersion of goods to al Nusra affiliates. The couple went to Turkey expecting to return to Germany, but missing paperwork for their daughter ended the plan. The couple returned to Syria and joined ISIS November 2014. In February 2019, Fatiha B. was detained by Kurdish forces and repatriated to Germany with her four children in March 2022.
35	Nadine K./2 StE 9/22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Membership in a foreign terrorist organization - Violation of the war weapons control act (exercise of actual control) - Crimes against humanity (enslavement, deprivation of liberty, and persecution) - Aiding and abetting genocide (extinction) - Aiding and abetting crimes against humanity (extinction, displacement, and sexual violence) - Aiding and abetting war crimes against persons (sexual violence and displacement) - Human trafficking for labor exploitation - Exploitation using deprivation of liberty - Severe deprivation of liberty - Acquitted of a war crime against property <p>1st instance, pending appeal</p>	9 years and 3 months (prison)	Sept 16, 2022 – June 21, 2023	German national who travelled to Syria in December 2014 to join her husband according to Islamic law who had travelled there in summer 2014. While her husband worked as a doctor for ISIS, Nadine K. took care of the household and their two daughters. The couple took in different ISIS women whose husbands had either died or were on combat missions. Nadine K. was keeping several weapons, including a Kalashnikov rifle, in their house. In April 2016, her husband was given an enslaved Yazidi woman as a gift, and she lived with the couple for three years. The couple exploited her for housework and child care, and forced her to pray. The woman was also regularly raped by Nadine K.'s husband, which Nadine K. enabled. In March 2019, the couple was arrested by Kurdish forces and Nadine K. was repatriated to Germany with her children in March 2022.

36	Sarah K./III-5 StS 4/22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Membership in a foreign terrorist organization - War crimes against property - Failure to fulfill her duty of care or education <p>Charges for inciting violations of the prohibition of provisions of the Foreign Trade and Payments Act dropped</p> <p>Juvenile justice</p>	3 years	Sept 19, 2022 – Feb 14, 2023	German national who travelled together with her husband and her child to Syria in October 2013. In spring 2014, Sarah K. spent some time in Turkey with her child due to the war before returning to ISIS territory. While her husband fought for ISIS, Sarah K. took care of the household and their children, living in houses provided by ISIS. The couple received monthly allowances and had another daughter. After her husband's death in December 2014, Sarah K. married another ISIS fighter and had another son. She was detained by Kurdish forces in November 2017 and was repatriated with her children to Germany in March 2022.
37	Kevser T./3 OJs 42/22 and III-5 StS 6/22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Membership in a foreign terrorist organization - Failure to fulfill her duty of care or education 	2 years (probation)	Dec 12, 2022 – April 25, 2023	German-Turkish national who travelled to Syria together with her son in May 2014, joining her husband Florian L. While her husband fought for ISIS, Kevser T. took care of the household and their child, receiving financial allowances from ISIS. In September 2014, she supported the travel of two ISIS members to Syria, tried to transfer money for ISIS and recruit another German individual. Kevser T. was detained in 2018 and stayed in a Kurdish camp until her repatriation in October 2022.
38	Kristin L./3 St 2 BJs 368/19;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Membership in a foreign terrorist organization - Violation of the weapons act - Charges for aiding and abetting assault dropped <p>Juvenile justice</p>	1 year and 10 months (probation)	Jan 30, 2023 – June 12, 2023	German national who travelled to Syria in March 2015, where she married an ISIS fighter and had a child with him. Kristin L. took care of the household, educated their daughter according to ISIS ideology, took religious and Arabic language courses, and tried to recruit other German women to travel to ISIS. She received a pump gun as a wedding gift. Kristin L. surrendered to Kurdish forces in March 2019 and was repatriated to Germany in October 2022.
39	Marcia M./5 St 1/23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Membership in a foreign terrorist organization - A war crime against property 	8 years and 6 months (prison)	Feb 15, 2023 - Sept 4, 2023	German national who travelled with her husband according to Islamic law to Syria in September 2015, where they joined ISIS. After ideological training in Raqqa, she received weapons training. While her husband fought for in Iraq and Syria, she took care of the household and translated propaganda documents, receiving a monthly allowance from ISIS. In Iraq, the couple lived in a house provided by ISIS. In 2016, she participated in the planning of a terrorist attack in Germany by recruiting several women who were supposed to marry the would-be attackers as a cover for their stay in

					Germany. Marcia M. also joined the Khatiba Nusaybah where she was trained in the fabrication of explosives and suicide belts. The couple surrendered to Kurdish forces in October 2017 and Marcia M. was repatriated to Germany in October 2022.
40	Nadja R./5 St 1/23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Membership in a foreign terrorist organization - War crimes against property 	3 years and 3 months (prison)	March 7, 2023 – Jan 24, 2024	German-Lebanese national who travelled to Syria to join ISIS in July 2014, where she married Cem K. (an ISIS fighter from Germany) according to Islamic law. While Cem K. worked as an ISIS fighter, Nadja R. took care of the household and their two sons as well as cared for Cem K. after he had lost a leg in combat. The couple received an allowance from ISIS and lived in accommodation provided by the terrorist organization in Syria and Iraq. Nadja R. also tried recruiting other women via Facebook. When trying to leave ISIS territory, Nadja R. was arrested by Kurdish forces in 2017 and remained in Northeast Syria until her and her children's repatriation in October 2022.