

The reality of the Iraqi- Iranian war and Kurdish occupation of Erbil

By Mofak Salman Kerkuklu



Iraqi soldiers killed by the United State and British 1991 in Mattilae region, during the expulsion of Iraqi troops from Kuwait in March 1991

The outbreak of war between Iran and Iraq in 1980 was one of the Turkmen's most painful tragedies unfolded during the Iran and Iraq war 1980 to 1988. During the Iran-Iraq War, the KDP forces worked closely with Iranian government, but the PUK remained hostile to cooperation with Islamic Republic of Iran. However, during the nine years war the Iranian counterattack opened a northern front in Kurdish north in 1983. With support from KDP fighters, Iranian troops and Iranian revolutionary guards took the key town of *Hajj Qumran*. Nevertheless the PUK agreed to a ceasefire with Iraq in 1983 and began negotiations on Kurdish autonomy.

In the meantime hundreds of Türkmen commenced to rebels' against of the Iraqi government and the Türkmen started to arm themselves in northern of Iraq and a Türkmen military camp was established in north of Iraq adjacent to the to the PUK militia camps. One of the adjacent countries to Iraq was providing the logistical and financial support to the Iraq Türkmen but their military operation against the Baath regime was controlled by PUK.

The fear of the PUK from Türkmen militia to grow and enlargement in northern of Iraq, the Türkmen militia members were informed not to carry any hostile action towards the Saddam regime since the PUK is in negotiation with the Saddam Hussein government as the consequences the Türkmen militia in North of Iraq that were mainly from district of *Tuz Khormatu* were forced involuntarily by the PUK to leave the area.

The overwhelming majority of the Türkmen militia member ended in Karaj refugee camp near Tehran and the remaining Türkmen members went to Syria, but under increasing Iraqi government repression for the Kurds and Türkmen in 1985, the ceasefire began to break down between the Kurds and Iraqi army by the 1986. In the meantime the Islamic Republic of Iran sponsored a meeting reconciling the KDP and PUK and both major Kurdish parties started receiving logistical, financial and arm support from Islamic Republic of Iran.

During the Iran-Iraq War, the KDP fighters helped the Iranian in their war against the Iraqi. The Iranian counterattack in north of Iraq and with support from KDP fighters by attacking the Iraqi troops from behind, Iranian troops took the key town of *Halabjah*, and this caused a large area to be under the mercy of the Iranian artillery attack and this caused the Iraqi government to utilise a chemical weapon against the Kurdish militia and Iranian revolutionary guards and Iranian army, to prevent them from further penetration of the Iraqi territory.

The Iraqi army attack caused large numbers of Kurdish civilians dead in 16th of March 1988 in a poison gas attack on the town of *Halabjah* near the Iranian border. Then human rights watchdogs and Kurdish groups hold the Iraqi regime responsibility for the tragedy that was occurred in the town of *Halabjah*.

The Iran- Iraq war from the Türkmen perspective, during the Iran- Iraqi war, tens of thousands of young Türkmen were enrolled and all Türkmen reservists were called back to serve in the Iraqi army to fight against the Iranians, their families in Türkmeneli were discriminated against by the Ba'ath regime and thousands of Türkmen were forcibly displaced and their property was confiscated under the pretext that they were opposing the war and were members of the outlawed *Da'wa* political party! The Ba'ath regime used the Türkmen as a scapegoat during the Iraq-Iran War, the First Gulf War by sending thousands of Turkmens into frontline war fighting the Iranian forces whereas Arabs and, especially members of the Ba'ath Party, were stationed in safe places, providing planning and logistical support.

The Iraq invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 led to United Nations Security Council imposed sanctions on Iraq for its invasion. Nevertheless, the Arabisation plan against the Türkmen was repeated again in 1991, the Ba'ath regime deliberately brought the Türkmen during the liberation of Kuwait. As the result of these wars, thousands of Iraqi Türkmen lost their lives. They either were killed in battle or went missing in action. The Iraqi Türkmen suffered severely under the dictatorship of the Socialist Arab Ba'ath Party, whereas the Kurds were exempt from carrying out national military services this legislation was introduced by the dictatorship of the Socialist Arab Ba'ath Party, in my opinion the legislation was produced because of the luck trust in the Kurds.

In addition to the suffering of the Türkmen extended to the Türkmen district of *Telafer* were Thousand of Türkmen were driven to war and a large numbers of innocent and young Türkmen were killed in the battles, almost every house in Telafer had a dead, casualties, war prisoner or missing person in the war. However by the year 1991, the United State led coalition acting under United Nation. Resolutions

expelled Iraq from Kuwait in February 1991. In the meantime the United Nations Security Council passes Resolution 687, which bared Iraq from having or retaining chemical weapons, biological weapons, and ballistic missiles with a ranger greater than 150 kilometres, and nuclear weapons.



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Iraqi Military equipments destroyed by the United State and British 1991in Mattilae region, during the expulsion of Iraqi troops from Kuwait in March 1991



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The oppression of the dictatorship of the Socialist Arab Ba'ath Party to the Iraqis led to the 1991 uprisings in Iraq which was a series of anti-governmental rebellions in Southern and Northern Iraq during the aftermath of the Gulf War.

The revolt was fuelled by the perception that the power of Saddam Hussein was vulnerable at the time; as well as by heavily fuelled anger at government repression and the devastation wrought by two wars in a decade, the Gulf War and the Iran -Iraq War. United States also had a role in instigating the uprisings, which were then controversially not aided by the United State forces present on Iraqi soil.

The revolts in the Shi'aa dominated southern and western of Iraq of involved demoralized Iraqi Army troops and the anti-government Shi'aa parties, in particular the Islamic Da'wa Party and Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq. Another wave of insurgency broke out shortly afterwards in the northern Iraq; unlike the spontaneous rebellion in the south, the uprising in the north was organized by two Kurdish party militias: the KDP and the PUK, and some long-term planning had taken place.

Although rebellion and uprising had presented a very serious threat to the Iraqi Ba'ath Party but the regime, Saddam managed to quell and suppress the rebellions with iron fist and also using massive and indiscriminate force and maintained power. The rebellions were ruthlessly crushed by the loyalist forces and spearheaded by the Iraqi Republican Guard and the population was successfully terrorized. During the few weeks of unrest, tens of thousands of people were killed. Many more died during the following months, while nearly two million Iraqis fled for their lives. [1]

However, the Kurdish militia's unsuccessful revolt against the Saddam regime in 1991 caused a lot of uncertainty for the Türkmén and the Kurds in northern Iraq. The revolt of 1991 had caused more unrest, imprisonment and execution among the Türkmén especially when the Kurdish rebels in the north of Iraq withdrew without coordination and left the Türkmén as scapegoats to be slaughtered by the regime particularly as happened in the Türkmén district of Tuz Khormatu and sub_district of Altunköprü. The 1991 uprising was crushed by the Saddam Hussein government, Türkmén have paid a very high price especially the Türkmén in the sub-district in *Dibis* in *Altunköprü*.

On the 28th of March 1991 in the sub_district of Altunköprü hundreds of Turkmen were arrested by the Ba'ath regime and taken from their homes and executed by the Iraqi Death Squad and Secret Police all which is known as *Mukhbarat* and their bodies were dumped in open ground in the sub_district of Dibis. After three days from the uprising the Turkmen families were not able to collect their relative corps because of fear from an Iraqi *Mukhbarat* reprisal. The most striking thing was that no single Kurdish person was killed during the uprising in Altunköprü in 1991 because the Kurdish militias escaped and left unarmed civilian to be under the mercy of the Saddam Hussein's security and Special Forces.

The uprising caused a mass exodus of the Türkmén and Kurds to towards the Turkish border, the reprisal of the Iraqi government against the Arabs in the south against the Arabs continued. The uprising grinds to a halt and US-led forces refuse to intervene to support the rebels. As the results of this, a mass exodus occurred in Iraq. Around 1.5 million Kurds flee before the Iraqi onslaught, but Turkey closes the border forcing hundreds of thousands to seek refuge in the mountains

The international aid agencies launched a massive aid operation to help the refugees and Turkish government provided food, shelter and tents to the mass exodus of the Türkmén, Assyrian and Kurds who

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iraqi_no-fly_zones#cite_note-0

have take a refuge on the Iraqi-Turkish border from being attacked by Saddam Hussein armed forces. After that, the United Nations passed Resolution 688, on 5th of April calling on Iraq to end repression of its population and by the 6th of April, Operation Provide Comfort began to bring humanitarian relief to the Kurds in northern of Iraq. Turkey opened his border to allow a mass humanitarian aid to the refugees who escape the Iraqi forces reprisal.

After the Gulf War of 1991 to protect humanitarian operations in northern Iraq and Shiite in the south, in August 1992 the No Fly Zone in the north of Iraq was established. The Iraqi No Fly Zone was a set of two separate No-Fly Zones, and was proclaimed by the U.S, U.K and France.

One was established at the north to the 36th parallel and the other in the south to the 32nd parallel. The northern No Fly Zone was initially part of Operation Provide Comfort relief operations to a persecuted Kurdish minority in Iraq. The US used a Turkish airbase in Ercirlik to impose No-Fly Zone. In addition, the Iraqi aircraft were forbidden from flying inside these two established zones.

This operation, Provide Comfort, officially ended in 31 December 1996 and was replaced by Operation Northern Watch on the 1st of January 1997, which focused more on enforcing the northern no fly zone to protect the Kurdish population in the north rather than direct humanitarian assistance.

During the enforcing, a no fly zone in northern Iraq the Iraqi Kurdish militia power strengthened dramatically although the Iraq was under sanction by the west and Iran and the only access for the Kurdish survival was through Turkish border gate of *Khabur*. The economic in north of Iraq flourished by smuggling the Iraqi oil by both of Kurdish parties to the neighbouring countries and also the humanitarian support provided to the Kurds from the western countries and international organisations.

In 2002, the Turkish government planned to allow more humanitarian aid to the Kurds in northern Iraq. Turkish government had suggested opening Ufa Koy border gate which goes through the city of Telafer but the Turkish proposal was completely rejected by the Iraqi Kurds and the US. This was due to the economical, political reasons and reprisal from Turkish government of banning the U.S army to invade northern of Iraq using Turkish territory.

Since the Iraq possesses strategic vitality for the United State interests in the Middle East, then it was a great necessity for the U.S to construct strategic plans, which will preserve U.S strategic interests and the sphere of influence in the end. In that aim, alliance with the Kurdish groups can be viewed as a possible tactical instrument both to preserve U.S economic interests in the region and to contain Iranian sphere of influence, which can be channeled by the Shi'aa majority of Iraqi population. The Coalition forces objective was that to pave the way for the establishment of a Kurdish State in northern of Iraq. It was clearly noticed that the city of Suleymaniya is located below the North of 36th parallel no-fly zone but it was included under the Coalition forces protection whereas the city of Mosul and Türkmen district of Telafer was within the North of 36th parallel No Fly Zone and was not included under the Coalition forces protection.

it was clearly noticed after the fall of the Saddam Hussein regime when both Kurdish parties have been rewarded more political and economical power than was expected for the other ethnic groups who were living in Iraq.

The no fly Zone helped both Kurdish parties to revive and have more control on the administration of northern Iraq. While the Coalition forces controlling northern Iraq, the PUK leader Jalal Talabani and KDP Massoud Barzani opened negotiations with Saddam Hussein on autonomy for Kurdistan.

The relation between the two Kurdish parties KDP and PUK have always been critical; there was a lack of trust and there was territorial conflict between both parties. In May 1994, a clashes between both KDP and PUK party forces spilled over into outright civil war. The PUK militia captured the towns of

Shaqlawah and *Chamchamal* from the KDP in August 1996, and the PUK militia surrounded the KDP headquarter at the *Salahaddin* resort when the news was reached to the KDP Massoud Barzani the leader of the KDP that the PUK militia had captured the KDP headquarter, after few hours from the news, the KDP leader Massoud Barzani announced to his supporter that tomorrow we (KDP) will have a lunch in city of Erbil and all his supporter were surprised by this announcement but only few of his close advisers knew what was happening.

In fact, Massoud Barzani had approached the Saddam Hussein regime and had requested help and assistance to defeat and expel his rival PUK from Erbil. On the 31st of August 1996 the Iraqi National Guard and in conjunction with the KDP, militia stormed the city of Erbil. Later this was revealed by Tariq Aziz the Foreigner Minister of the Saddam Hussein government that the KDP leader Massoud Barzani, on the 30th of August 1996 appealed to Saddam Hussein for help and he asked for a direct a military intervention in Erbil to defeat the PUK in the city of Erbil.

On the morning of the 31 of August the KDP militia, Iraqi National Guard, Iraqi armed forces and Iraqi secret service, occupied the city of Erbil. A large number of the Iraqi opposition were arrested. Then they were executed by the Saddam security forces which are known as *Al_Mukhbara* at the graveyard opposite to the *Ruzgarri General Hospital* in Erbil in the meantime the *Türkmen National Party* headquarter in Erbil was also attacked on the 1st of September 1996 by the Kurdish militia and Iraqi army and the attack caused dozens of deaths among the Iraqi *Türkmen National Party* members.

But the most shocking and striking thing was after the fall of the Saddam Hussein regime in 2003. The US forces rewarded the KDP leader Massoud Barzani for his atrocities and oppression of the Kurds, Turkmen and Assyrian by appointing him as the president of the Kurdish Regional Government in northern of Iraq. This decision was not surprising to many of the Iraqis, however some of the Iraqis were expecting to see that the KDP leader Massoud Barzani be arrested and trialled for his crime and atrocities that had been committed against humanity in the north of Iraq in 1996. But this arrest was unlikely to happen since the US and the new established Iraqi government were in need for Massoud Barzani to control North of Iraq after the fall of Saddam Hussein.



The daily newspaper *Al_Iraq* published images of Saddam Hussein and Massoud Barzani the Kurdish KDP leader celebrating the end of the PUK Kurdish leader Jalal Talabani in Baghdad

The present Iraqi government army and secret service was almost null and this promoted and encouraged the Iraqi opposition groups from all ethnics to set their opposition parties headquarters in the north of Iraq to fight against the Saddam Hussein government.

As the matter of fact, prior to the invasion of Erbil by the Iraqi army, the Iraqi National Guards, Iraqi Special Forces and the KDP forces cooperated simultaneously to attack the KDP militia and other Iraqi opposition forces who took the city of Erbil as an opposition base to attack the Iraqi forces. After 1991, the northern part of Iraq saw some kind of political stability and political freedom.

There were over 220 Türkmens armed guards serving in the Türkmens National Party Headquarter and some of the Türkmens guards were stationed on the adjacent building. After the KDP entered Erbil, there was fierce fighting between the KDP and Turkmen guards. The Türkmens armed forces in Erbil, known as *Akenci*, showed a fierce resistance against the Iraqi army and KDP militia. One hundred and ninety Türkmens were killed and large number of them were arrested and taken by Al_Mukhabarat. They were taken to the city of Mosul to be interrogated by the Iraqi Military Intelligent and one of the arrested men was the prominent Turkmen, Mohammed Rasheed who was leading the Türkmens militia and later was executed by the Iraqi government.

After the occupation of city of Erbil by the KDP militia, a press statement was released by the KDP on the liberation of the city of Erbil from PUK and also the KDP party expressed its thanks and appreciation for the Iraqi government leadership for their help and support, also the KDP party thanked the Iraqi government from stopping the Iranian government intervention into the Iraqi internal affair in general and especially in Northern of Iraq. After few days the KDP leader Massoud Barzani visited Saddam Hussein to express his thanks and gratitude for his assistance in expelling the PUK militia from Erbil and this meeting was broadcasted live by the Iraqi TV station in Baghdad showing Massoud Barzani appreciation to the deposed Iraqi president.

The expulsions of the KDP forces out of the city of Erbil were also stated by the Iraqi foreigner Minister Moreover Mr. Tariq Aziz on the 31/8/1996 at press conference and he revealed that the Massoud Barzani's appealed to Saddam Hussein for help. This was published in detail on the *Al_Iraq Newspaper* on the 19th of November 1996, issue number 6098 with a headline "*The dirty role of Jalal Talabani is, ended and victorious of the Iraqi army*". Since then with the help of Iraqi government troops, KDP forces seized the northern city of Erbil by September 1996 - and take the PUK stronghold and a new KDP-led government was announced at the parliament building in Erbil and in October 1996 the Kurdish militia belong to PUK leader Jalal Talabani retook the city of Suleymaniyah. By the January 1997, the PUK party lead by the Jalal Talabani announced a new government based in Suleymaniyah and both the PUK and KDP claim jurisdiction over the whole of the Kurdish controlled North.

The disagreement between the KDP and PUK parties continued till the American administration in 1998 when called both PUK party leader Jalal Talabani and KDP party leader Massoud Barzani to sign a peace agreement in Washington, but government of the Kurdish region remained split between the two rival administrations.

The PUK militia controlled the city of Suleymaniyah but the rival Islamic group which is known as *Jund Al-Islam* continued to grow in the area and became a rival to the PUK. The *Jund al-Islam* competition with the PUK in the region resulted in fighting between the two rivals in September, 2001 and as the consequence of this, hundreds of people died on both sides in this clash. But later The *Jund al-Islam* organisation was renamed *Ansar al-Islam*.

The most striking thing was that after the fall of Saddam Hussein regime, both KDP forces with the help of the U.S forces on the 22nd of March 2003 attacked and stormed the *Ansar al-Islam* positions in northern

Iraq Mountains. Within a couple of days the PUK and US forces had successfully managed to push out *Ansar al-Islam* of North of Iraq by bombarding their military position and camps using military airplanes and long range missiles. During the three day attack, the positions of the *Jund Al-Islam* were continuously pounded by both forces. As a consequence of this, a large number of *Ansar al-Islam* fled to Iran and other parts of Iraq.

The US had been claiming that *Ansar al-Islam* was a terrorist organisation and listed on the US terrorist organisation list. The US forces and KDP forces managed within couple of days to eliminate the *Ansar al-Islam* from northern of Iraq, whereas the Kurdish guerrillas PKK were based in northern Iraq. There are over 5000 members of the PKK terrorists' organisation who have been stationed in Northern of Iraq. The PKK terrorist organisation has been using the mountainous area in northern Iraq to attack neighbouring countries. Although this PKK organisation which is listed in the terrorist list in the US administration and majority of European countries terrorist lists were still intact and no action has been taken by both KDP and US to expel these terrorist organisations from the north of Iraq, but the PKK terrorist organisation has been helped by the KDP and also were used as a pressure tool against the Turkish government by the US and Kurdish administration.

Prior to the invasion of Iraq by United State and British Forces in February 2003, United State Secretary of State Colin Powell accuses Iraqi Kurdish Islamist group Ansar al-Islam of playing a pivotal role in linking Osama Bin Ladin's al-Qaeda network with the Iraqi regime. In the meantime the PUK and KDP party leaders in February 2003 rejected proposals to bring Turkish troops into northern Iraq as part of a US-led military campaign to oust Saddam regime. With the help of both Kurdish parties anti-Turkish demonstrators took place to the streets of Kurdish town and in parallel to this a parliamentary bill allowing US troops to deploy on Turkish soil hits American plans to open a northern front against Iraq failed to pass from the Turkish parliament .in the meantime the KDP and PUK create a "joint higher leadership" in the Kurdish-held north, under the chairmanship of the two party leaders, Massoud Barzani and Jalal Talabani in the 3rd of March 2003.

The US led coalition forces invaded Iraq in 20th of March 2003 and began bombardment of Baghdad and other cities. The city of Musul and Kerkuk near the Kurdish enclaves came under heavy fire from the coalition forces. The US attack continued in all part of Iraq thousand of civilian were killed during the attack. The coalition forces attacks have caused tremendous damage on the Iraqi army as well as the country infrastructure. Industries, factories, bridges, oil refineries governmental building and offices were come also under the attack from the Coalition forces.

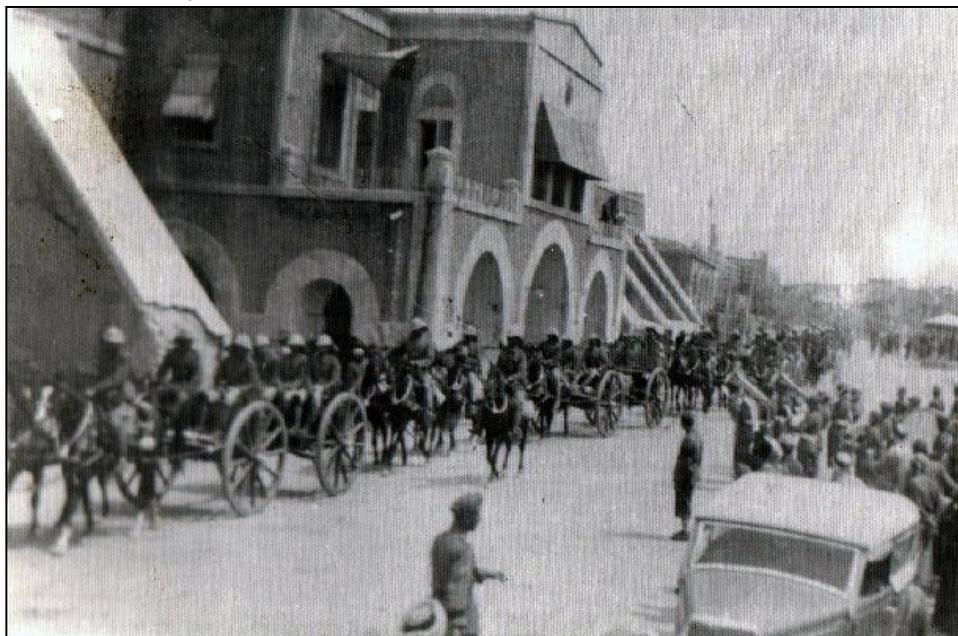
Then on the 9th of April 2003 April, United States forces advance into central Baghdad and Saddam Hussein's grip on the city was broken. In the following days, Kurdish fighters and **United State** forces took control of the northern cities of Kerkuk and Musul. The toppling of Saddam Hussein in 2003 was changing point in the Iraqi history, the lack of security, stability and present of the chaos. A hundreds of Kurdish militia poured into the Türkmen city of Kerkuk and Musul, which were both under control of the Ba'ath regime. The Kurdish militia ransacked the municipality buildings in Kerkuk and Musul, government offices, and military buildings. The land deeds for the Türkmen were deliberately taken from the Registry Office making it difficult for the Türkmen to establish themselves as original inhabitants of the province. Large hotels and a historical military barracks in the city that was used as a museum, which was built in the Ottoman era, were set alight by Kurdish rebels, along with Türkmen shops and houses, including the land registry office.

The city of Musul has suffered looting by the Kurds almost the same as the city of Kerkuk but there was few looting in the city of Telafer because the Türkmen populations have organized local militia to protect the government building and properties from being looted and burned. The most striking about the Telafer no bank was rubbed or looted. The director of the Iraqi Rafideen Bank in the city of Telafer Mr. Mohammed Ali Maca who is a Türkmen citizen from *Kaplan* tribe minded the bank money in house and later was returned to the Bank. It's the view of many Iraqis, that the Kurds are more destructive than constructive.

The invasion of Kerkuk in 2003 by the Kurdish militia was a mirror image of the events from 1991 during the uprising against Saddam Hussein after Operation Desert Storm. In addition, thousands of internally displaced Kurds and Türkmen were returned to Kerkuk and other Arabise regions to reclaim their homes and lands that had been occupied by Arabs from central and southern Iraq. These returnees were forcibly expelled from their homes by the government of Saddam Hussein during the 1980s and 1990s.

The majority of the returning Kurds were not originally from Kerkuk but were brought to Kerkuk with the help of two Kurdish parties. The reasoning behind this was that they wanted to change the demography the city and win the referendum that was planned to be carried out by 31 December 2007 to determine whether Kerkuk could formally join the Kurdish administered region, an outcome that Arabs and Türkmen in Kerkuk staunchly opposed. However, the unresolved issue was the future of Kerkuk, an oil rich city in northern Iraq, which is home to a substantial number of Türkmen, Kurds, and Arabs. This mixture within the city made it a powder keg.

However, the Türkmen, Arabs, and Chaldo Assyrians had high expectations of the interim administration established after 9th of April, 2003. The Türkmen expected to see democracy, fairness, an end to discrimination, the right to self-determination and an end to violence. Unfortunately, the opposite has occurred regarding the human rights situation in Iraq, in particular concerning the Iraqi Türkmen. The Türkmen have been subject to campaigns by the Kurds in Türkmeneli in an often more brutal fashion than carried out on Kurds by Saddam Hussein.



Kerkuk military barracks (Kerkuk Saray)

The Kerkuk city holds strategic as well as symbolic value for the Iraqi people in general and for the Türkmens especially!

The ocean of oil beneath its surface could be used to drive the economy of an independent Kurdistan, the ultimate goal for many Kurds in north of Iraq. The Kurdish militia's hope is to make the city of Kerkuk and its vast oil reserves part of an autonomous Kurdistan, whereas the Türkmens, Chaldo Assyrians, and Arabs are fiercely and staunchly opposing the inclusion of Kerkuk in an autonomous region. This is because of its strategic importance; the fight over the control of the province has proved to be one of the focal points of the conflict in northern Iraq. Kurdish control over Kerkuk could fuel Kurdish nationalism in the region and undermine the rights of Türkmens, Arabs and Chaldo Assyrians residents in Kerkuk.

Kerkuk itself has become almost synonymous with the abusive Kurdisation campaign, which illustrates the persistency of the designs that the Kurds have on Kerkuk. The fate of the city of Kerkuk has been one of the thorniest issues of Iraq's constitutional process. Under Article 140 of the document ratified by Iraqis on 15 Oct. 2005, a referendum on the status of Kerkuk was to be implemented in the province no later than 31 Dec. 2007. This was to happen only after the Iraqi government had taken measures to repatriate former Arabs residents, resettle Türkmens and Kurds or compensate them, implement normalization and carry out the census in Kerkuk. After the toppling of Saddam, the Kurds intensified their Kurdisation campaign in the city of Kerkuk.

The Kurdish officials working at the administration of the Kerkuk municipality, confiscated real estate and lands belonging to the town administration and granted them to ethnic Kurds who were newly arrived in Kerkuk and who were not originally from the town. However, throughout Kerkuk and across hundreds of remote farming villages, the Kurdish political parties did the job themselves. The PUK had openly provided \$5,000 to each repatriated Kurdish family. Tens of thousands of Kurds resettled in the city and surrounding villages after the toppling of the Saddam Hussein regime, many with the help of both Kurdish parties.

The Iraqi Kurds attempted by various methods to eliminate Türkmens identity, especially those from Kerkuk city, in order to dilute them into Kurdish society. The economic, political, and cultural aspects for the Türkmens completely changed when the Kurds brought over 690,000 Kurds to city of Kerkuk. This was clearly organized and orchestrated by both Kurdish parties in order to change the demography of Kerkuk.

The both Kurdish parties have encouraged and offered financial support to all Kurdish families that were brought from outside Kerkuk. The demographic structure of Kerkuk have changed seriously and distorted as Kurds, backed by armed Peshmerga forces. All Kurdish families migrated into the city in large groups claiming to be original residents. This scandal was discovered and denounced by the Swedish Migration Minister, Mr. Tobias Billstrom in February 2007 when it was discovered that the Iraqi Ambassador to Sweden, a Kurd and named *Ahmed Bamarni*, had been issuing Iraqi passports to non-Iraqi Kurds from Syria, Iran, Turkey and Lebanon.

This was identified by the Swedish authorities that the Iraqi embassy in Sweden alone had issued twenty-six thousand passports to non-Iraqis and that all of these passport holders were supposed to have been born in Kerkuk. Consequently, thousands of internally displaced Kurds and Türkmens returned to Kerkuk and other Arabise regions to reclaim their homes and lands, which had been occupied by Arabs from central and southern Iraq. These returnees were forcibly expelled from their homes by the government of Saddam Hussein during the 1980s and 1990s. Massoud Barzani declared that 250,000 Kurds, including

Türkmen, were expelled from Kerkuk while in fact and according to the Ration Card Data Base considered by the United Nations to be a reliable source for information on the Iraqi population; some 12,000 inhabitants were expelled from Kerkuk under the previous regime, one third being Türkmen.

On 10 April 2003, Kerkuk had 810,000 inhabitants and today, four years after the occupation of Kerkuk by the Kurdish militia and the massive influx of Kurds to Kerkuk, the population of Kerkuk is over 1.5 million inhabitants; all newcomers are Kurds. The majority of the returning Kurds were not originally from Kerkuk but had been brought in to help win the referendum of December 2007 to determine whether Kerkuk could formally join the Kurdish administered region. The Kurdish militia insisted that the constitution required a referendum by December 2007 to determine whether Kerkuk could formally join the Kurdish administration region. The Arabs and Türkmen in Kerkuk staunchly opposed this because the demography of the city had changed so dramatically in favor of the Kurds. In addition to this, a true referendum result was going to be nigh on impossible considering that the country was under occupation, there was lack of the security and stability, and that specific groups had forced this legislation on the Iraqis.

James Baker & Lee Hamilton [2] called for a major delay to the constitutional referendum because holding a census could lead to regional conflict. The risks of further violence sparked by a referendum were great and potentially explosive, with the possibility of violent clashes among the ethnic groups and even a civil war across Iraq. Not only could this lead to the disintegration of Iraq but there was also the great possibility that Iran, Syria and Turkey would have sought intervention and involvement. The Turkish Republic in particular - which has always attributed a high importance to independence and liberty throughout its history was conscious of the need to preserve and maintain its capability of protecting its sovereign rights, its territorial integrity, the stability in the region and its national and international interests. Any clashes in Kerkuk would have provoked the Turkish government into some form of action.

The Iraqi Study Group Report on the Kerkuk issue, submitted by James Baker and Lee Hamilton, was considered by the Türkmen to be a realistic, constructive, well-structured and comprehensive document that covered all aspects that related to Iraqi issues and provided new hope for the future of Iraq. It was of the utmost importance that the status of Kerkuk should be delayed: quoted in Page Number 45, recommendation 30 on the Iraq Study Group Report, James A. Baker, III and Lee H. Hamilton, 2007. [3]

² Recommendation 30 Kerkuk. *“Given the very dangerous situation in Kerkuk, international arbitration is necessary to avert communal violence. Kerkuk’s mix of Kurdish, Arab, and Turkmen populations could make it a powder keg. A referendum on the future of Kerkuk (as required by the Iraqi Constitution before the end of 2007) would be explosive and should be delayed. This issue should be placed on the agenda of the International Iraq Support Group as part of the New Diplomatic Offensive.”*

³ *Another key unresolved issue is the future of Kerkuk, an oil-rich city in northern Iraq that is home to substantial numbers of Kurds, Arabs, and Turkmen. The Kurds insisted that the constitution require a popular referendum by December 2007 to determine whether Kerkuk can formally join the Kurdish administered region, an outcome that Arabs and Turkmen in Kerkuk staunchly oppose. The risks of further violence sparked by a Kerkuk referendum are great.”*



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