

The reality of the Kurdish violence in Kirkuk

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ITF Turkmen in Kirkuk after being attacked by the Kurds

In the middle of August 2008, Iraq's parliament reached an agreement on the Provincial Council Election Law, particularly with regard to Paragraph 24 of the law, which deals with the election mechanism in the Kirkuk Governorate. The postponement of the elections and adaptation of the division of Kirkuk to the three constituencies that include the proportion of 32 % for Arabs, Kurds, and Turkmen and 4% for Assyrians.

Turkmen, Arab and Assyrians proposed equal distribution of provincial council seats in the Kirkuk region - which is outside the Kurdish territory. This was vetoed by President Jalal Talabani and his deputy, Adel Abdul Mahdi.

Before the voting, the Kurds rejected secret ballot whereas the opposition had requested a secret ballot and the members of the Iraqi parliament voted open and secret voting. The majority of members have decided for secret voting and the deputy parliamentary speaker Khalid al-Attayah, a Shiite, said the secret ballot was unconstitutional and accused the lawmakers of "arm-twisting."

On the 22nd of August 2008, decision was made by 127 Iraqi members of parliament they voted in favour of the Provincial Council Election Law, particularly with regard to Paragraph 24 of the law, which deals with the election mechanism in

the Kirkuk Governorate. The distribution of power that include the proportion of 32 % for Arabs, Kurds, and Turkmen and 4% for Assyrians.

The security of the town shall be controlled by the central government rather than the current military forces that are stationed in the town. The security forces that are linked to the political parties have to leave.

The bill was approved by 127 out of 140 deputies that attended the meeting and 10 of those members decided not to vote. Two of them decided to vote against and one MP submitted a blank ballot paper but the Iraq's parliament still passed the law. The Kurds, along with the two deputy parliamentary speakers, walked out of the chamber after lawmakers decided to hold a secret ballot on a power-sharing item in the law for the disputed, oil-rich city of Kirkuk. This was vetoed by President Jalal Talabani and his deputy, Adel Abdul Mahdi.

On the 27th of July 2008 the secret police that are linked to both Kurdish parties distributed leaflets informing the people of Kirkuk, especially the Turkmen to participate in a protest that had been organised by the Kurds against the adoption of the law of elections for provincial assemblies causing a postponement of elections in the city for an indefinite period. Also the Kurdish police whom accompanied the Kurdish Asayish informed the Turkmen shop owners to close their shops and anyone who opened his shop would be subjected to punishment and his shop will be ransacked. The Kurdish Asayish separated roamers that all the governmental buildings would be close and the Kurdish directors in Kirkuk informed the Turkmen employees not to attend to work and anyone failing to do so he/she will be punished and his wages will be cut.

As the result of this, the Turkmen population in the Kirkuk was extremely worried and concerned as this event reminded the Turkmen of the Kurdish massacre of the Turkmen in 1959, when Turkmen were burned, killed,/executed. Some were attached to ropes and pulled behind cars in the mains street of Kirkuk by the Kurds and some communist party members. As a result, panic among the Turkmen population in Kirkuk caused them to approach the Turkmen member of the Kirkuk governing council Mr. Hassan Turan and Turkmen Chief of Police Burhan Tayip, asking for advice and help.

So on the 27th of July both Mr. Hassan Turan approached the Kirkuk governor Mr. Mustafa Abdullrahman who is a Kurd. After a lengthy meeting and discussion with him on this subject, Mr. Mustafa Abdullrahman acknowledged to Mr. Hassan Tuan that a Kurdish protest has been organised and he assured Mr. Hassan Turan but all the government offices shall be opened and participation in the demonstration is not compulsory.

But on the afternoon and evening of the 27th of July Mr. Hassan Turan and Turkmen Chief Police in Kirkuk Mr. Burhan Tayip and also Turhan Abdurrahman appeared on Turkmeneli TV advising the worried Turkmen population about the demonstration. What they have to do. Measures that are needed to be taken and both advised the Turkmen citizens to carry out their normal business. Shop keepers are free to open their shops and all governmental offices would open and no one should be forced to participate in this demonstration. He also mentioned that the Kurds have the right to

demonstrate in order to express their protest. Both advised the population to be calm and avoid any provocation that might be implemented by the other side (which he meant by the Kurds).

In the meantime, the Kirkuk governor Mr., Mustafa Abdullrahman who is a Kurd never appeared on the TV or on radio to assure the population in Kirkuk this is going to be a Kurdish demonstration and no one is forced to attend this protest. Whereas the Kurdish directors for many government offices have openly threatened Turkmens staff their salaries will be cut if they do not participate in the protest. The Kurdish police have threatened the shop keepers to close their shops and any shop that opens will be looted and destroyed.

In the meantime on the 27th of July, mini bus drivers owned by the Turkmen reported that their car disc and certificate of Insurance had been forcedly taken by the Kurdish police and they were informed this would be returned when these drivers transport the Kurdish demonstrators to the meeting point free of charge.

On the 28th of July, prior to the demonstration the local government in Kirkuk and Kurdish-led personnel of the two Kurdish parties blocked all road access that lead to government works places. They set up various checking point in order to prevent the people from going to their work.

The shop keepers were forced to close their shops and Kurdish director in various governmental offices locked the main doors to prevent the people from attending their work place and forced the employees to participate in the demonstration.

At about 9.00am, approximately three thousand Kurdish protesters gathered near Turkmen Castel (Qelat Kirkuk) as a meeting point to commence their protest towards the Kirkuk governing in order to show their anger and to condemn the adoption of the law of elections for provincial assemblies and causing a postponement of elections in the city for an indefinite period by the Iraqi government.

Since the security of the town is controlled by both the US forces and the police in Kirkuk, thus they were obliged to guarantee the safety and security for the people in Kirkuk, but it was negligence on behalf of the US forces for granting permission for the Kurdish protest to go ahead and especially allowing the Kurdish protestors to pass through a routes that are mainly Turkmen neighbourhood, This protest was designed by the Kurds to show their musels and to provoke the Turkmen population in the town. Nevertheless, the demonstration commenced from Qelat Kirkuk toward the Kirkuk governing office to demand the holding of elections and the application of Article 140 for the normalization of the situation in the province.

According to the eyewitness, Kurdish demonstrators, Kurdish police wearing civil clothes were brought from outside of the Turkmen city of Kirkuk such as Erbil and Suleymaniyah by mini buses, private cars and police cars. This was to mislead the media and to show the world that the overwhelming population of Kirkuk was refusing the decision of the Iraqi central government towards the adoption of the law of elections for provincial assemblies causing a postponement of elections in the city for an indefinite period.

The Kurdish demonstrators prior the demonstration were seen carrying automatic weapons, pistols, iron bars, baseball bats and Kurdish flags. The protestors were escorted and protected by the local police forces that mainly consist of Kurds and also Kurdish secret service police who are known as Asayish.

The Kurdish protestors walked through the street of Kirkuk and chanting patriotic songs and provocation slogans against the Arabs and the Turkmens. Almost at 11am on the 28/7/2008 at the [Nafura] fountain area opposite to the Kirkuk governate, an explosion occurred and according to the Kurdish police, the explosion was caused by a female suicide bomber. Killing at least 22 and injuring at least 120 while the Kurdish were demonstrating but no one claimed responsibility for the bombing, which bore the hallmarks of Sunni Arab extremists. Nonetheless, many in the crowd blamed Kurds extremists for the attack.

After the explosion, the Kurdish guards started to open fire, shooting into the air as "Najat Hassam, a senior member of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), quoted by AFP as saying."More people responded to the gunfire with heavy shooting. The rumours in the towns was that the Kurdish police carried out this attack in order to create chaos, instability and to show the world that they are the victims but the more realistic reason was that to create a civil war thus the Kurdish militia would have a good reason to enter the town with large numbers of Kurdish militia.



Turkmen properties after being attacked by the Kurds

But within a few minutes, rumours and misleading information was started by the Kurdish police stating, the explosion was caused by the Turkmen. The Kurdish Asayish started directing the protestors to attack the Turkmen targets in the city of Kirkuk. Elsewhere, the media started broadcasting Kurdish news claiming that the Iraqi Turkmen Front (ITF) guards opened fire on the Kurdish demonstrators and that the Kurdish demonstrators defended themselves by replying back.

The protesters attacked the headquarters of the ITF party headquarters, the head quarter of the political prisoners and families of martyrs, Sonuber hotel, Turkmen shops and Turkmen properties. But the most striking thing was that the Turkmeneli TV Station was attacked and its content was burnt prior to the blast.

The ITF head office is approximately a distance of one kilometer away from the site of the blast and the ITF headquarters is located in a residential area and not on the main street as was stated by the Kurdish media.

A large number of Kurdish armed demonstrators escorted with Kurdish police opened heavy fire to the Turkmen guards whom were guarding the building which this resulted injury one of the guards, including the head of the security personnel. They set ablaze to their vehicles; the demonstrators later attacked Turkmen properties and the set a light to the cars and properties of the Turkmen people. Then the Kurdish Asayish burst into the ITF office and burnt it contents and cause a tremendous damages to the building and its contents. Then the Kurdish secret police kidnapped five Turkmen guards including the injured person.

One of the ITF guards was wounded and after they ran out of ammunition no help arrived from the police. Then the ITF building was stormed by the Kurdish secret police and the armed demonstrators. The five Turkmen guards including the injured guard were taken to the undisclosed location by the Kurdish Asayish.

Then the content of the Iraqi ITF building was ransacked and its content was set on the fire. Staff cars and ITF cars were set on fire and all this happened in the presence of the local Kirkuk police whom are mainly Kurds. All these atrocities occurred in the front of the eyes US forces and local police. The police forces in Kirkuk didn't take any action against the protesters but kept watching them.



ITF in Kirkuk after being attacked by Kurdish militia



Turkmen properties being attacked by the Kurds



ITF in Kirkuk after being attacked by Kurdish militia

But the most interesting thing was that after the explosion Mr. Yahya Albarzenchi, of Kurdish origin, a Cameraman working for Associated Press was taking images for the Kurdish protestors who are attacking the Turkmen, but unfortunately the protestors thought that Mr. Yahya Albarzenchi is a Turkmen citizen working for the Turkmeneli TV station as a Cameraman. He was immediately attacked by the Kurdish crowds with fists, sticks, iron bars and was kicked variously while he was lying on the ground unconscious. The footage of the attack on the Mr. Yahya Albarzenchi the cameraman working for Associated Press was shown frequently on the Turkmeneli TV Satellite on the 30th of July 2008. The Turkmeneli TV showed how the Kurdish mobs had beaten Mr. Yahya Albarzenchi even when he was unconscious on the ground. But prior to this film footage the Kurdish police announced that the Mr. Yahya Albarzenchi was among the dead during the blast.



Turkmen properties being attacked by the Kurds

After the explosion, the Kurdish police had set up check point on the road that leads into and out of Kirkuk. Cars were stopped and searched. Turkmen individuals were taken out of the car and attacked, beaten, abused and their car was smashed before leaving the check point. The attack on the Turkmen was widely condemned by Iraqi politicians, civil organizations and Turkmen organisations but the most striking thing was that Kirkuk governor and Iraqi president Jalal Talabani whom both is Kurds did not condemn the attack on the Turkmen in Kirkuk.



Turkmen properties being attacked by the Kurds

The problem of Kirkuk is not a constitutional one but lies in the ambiguity of Article 140. According to article 140 of Iraqi constitution, the problem of the disputed

areas, notably the oil-rich province of Kirkuk, addressed three stages of a normalization and then to conduct a census among the population, followed by a referendum on the fate of areas which will decide whether Kirkuk will join the Conservatives or the Kurdistan region. It was supposed to accomplish those stages during a maximum period of 31 December last year a deadline which was extended by the united nation representative without the approval of the central government for six months ending on June 30th.



Turkmen properties being attacked by the Kurds

Nevertheless, the Kurdish Brotherhood List at the Kirkuk Governorate Council held an extraordinary meeting on the 31/7/2008. The 24 members of the 41-member of the Kirkuk Governorate Council presented a request to the Kurdistan Region Government and the Iraqi parliament to make the governorate part of Kurdistan Region as they believe that Article 140 of the Constitution has not been implemented and that Article 24 of the Provincial Council Election Draft Law does not meet their ambitions.

Whereas the Turkmen and Arabs regarded this extraordinary session as illegal. Also the Turkmen leadership has requested to replace the Kurdish police in Kirkuk with army forces from central and southern Iraq, the postponement of the elections and adaptation of the division of Kirkuk to the three constituencies include the proportion of 32 % for both Arabs and Kurds and Turkmen and 4% for Assyrians

In the meantime, on the 31/7/2008, a statement by the Turkish Foreign Ministry was released regarding the issue of Kirkuk, which stated that the Turkish Foreign Ministry were concerned and were deeply alarmed about the demand by some members of the governorate of Kirkuk, regarding a Kurdish list to join the Northern Department. The Turkish Ministry of Foreign affairs said in a statement: *'We in Turkey express our deep concern on what we see and what happened in the governorate of Kirkuk,*

where some members agreed to join the Council in Kirkuk to the north of Iraq and Turkey's position on Kirkuk would not have ever changed in the present and future and the Arab and Turkmen called this moves by the Kurd as a provocation.'

However, on the 2/8/2008 the Arabs in the distrust of Hawija demonstrated against the Kurdish decision and the Turkmeneli Camera was there to show the plight of the Arabs. He was arrested when he returned to the check point that was set up by the Kurdish police at the entrance to Kirkuk. He was interrogated, abused verbally and physically.



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This book was written with four clear purposes in mind: firstly, to make an assessment of the current position of Turkmen in Kirkuk; secondly, to highlight the oppression of Turkmen after the toppling of Saddam Hussein's regime; thirdly, to introduce a brief history of the Turkmen in Iraq to the world; and finally, to draw the world's attention to the situation and the oppression of Turkmen in Iraq and also to reveal the Kurdish atrocities against the Turkmen