

Turkmens of Iraq: The Third Ethnic Component of Iraq

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I. Introduction

Turkmens are the third largest ethnic group in Iraq after Arabs and Kurds. Today, the Iraqi Turkmen population is estimated to be at around 2.5-3 million, taking into account all available estimates of towns and townships that they live in. They may constitute around 10% of the population, however previous sources provided estimates such as 14%-16% of the Iraqi population.[1] Turkmens speak the Turkmen language which is one of the Turkish languages similar to the Azerbaijani language (Azeri Turkish). Turkmens of Iraq have been settled in Iraq before the Ottoman Empire in 1516 A.D. In general terms, 60% Iraqi Turkmens are Sunni whereas 40% of them are Shia Muslims. In addition, there are Christian Turkmens living in Kirkuk (Gala Kawar).

Turkmens in the modern Iraqi history have been undergoing decades of assimilation campaigns in Iraq –often, in a more brutal fashion than the one carried out against Kurds.

II. Origin of Turkmens

Most people link the presence of Turkmens in Iraq to Ottoman Empire. However, Turkmens have been in Iraq much earlier than the Ottomans. There is a research indicating that the Sumerians who moved from central Asia in 5000 B.C. and settled around the

river Tigris, were originally ancestors of Turkmens. This argument is based on some similarities found between Sumerian and Turkish language, as there are around 600 words similar to each other in both languages. There have also been similarities such as the shape of their skulls between Mongolian Turks and Sumerians.

The historian Abbas Al Azwai in his book “Iraqi History between Two Occupations”, writes that Turkmens came from Turkmenistan, lived in Khurasan (Iran) and migrated from there to various parts of the world. The Russian historian, Bartold, in his book “History of Turk in Central Asia” claimed that they were three groups of nations: Akaz, Al Karlok, Al Tokaz or Alguz. They lived in the land extending from the Kazar Sea to China border and formed two biggest Empires in the history of Seljuk and Ottoman Empires. They moved to Iraq during different periods of Islamic invasion or in more specific terms during the caliphate of Omar Al Kattab. Others claim that 2,000 Turkmen fighters came to Iraq during the Ammuyiat period, subsequently more people came during the Abbasid period. They formed six Turkmen countries over 900 years. They lived in harmony with Arabs and other people in their lands.

According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, the name Turkmen is a synonym of Oguz, which includes all Turkish population that lives in the southwestern Central Asia. This includes the Turkish population of Turkey, Republic of Azerbaijan, Azerbaijan of Iran, Turkmenistan and other countries (i.e., Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Greece, Cyprus, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia and other European countries). In the Turkish language, *men/man* means powerful, magnificent, pure or original; so Turkmen in Turkish means a pure/original Turk. Also, others stated that Turkmen means Turkish man or Turkish fighter.

Turkmens of Iraq have established several Turkmen states in Iraq, such as Seljuk Empire (1118-1194), Dynasty of Mosul Atabekians (1127-1233), Dynasty of Erbil Atabekians (1144-1209), Turkmen Dynasty in Kirkuk (1230), State of Kara Koyunlu (1411-1470) and State of Ak Koyunlu (1470-1508).

To summarize, Turkmens are the descendants of those Oguz tribes who originally came from Central Asia. As stated by the El-Maroozi, the Oguz were divided into two main branches. The first branch settled in the cities; the second branches which settled in plain grasslands, and the Oguz tribes who converted to Islam were called Turkmen.

Turkmens did not leave their ancestral lands in one massive migration. However, they departed their land in successive waves over a long period and eventually settled in the Middle East.[2]

III. Population of Turkmens

Some sources generously estimate that Turkmens consist of up to 16% of the Iraqi population, and others estimate 10% of the Iraqi

population. If the current Iraqi population is 35 million, this means that Turkmen population would be more than 3 million (see Figure 1).

There is no accurate census about the number of Turkmens in Iraq. In recent years, there are only estimates for various reasons: Turkmens have been subject to systematic assimilation and deliberate displacement over decades for ethnic cleansing. For instance, they had been displaced from their lands where they had been living for hundreds of years.

During Saddam's ruling period, between 1970 and 2003, many Turkmen people were forced to change their identity and ethnicity and to become Arab. Turkmens had no right to build up or own a land in Kirkuk unless they changed their identity and they became Arab. In addition, Turkmen citizens were forced by the official channels (The Ministry of Planning) and were being paid as little as 500 Iraqi dinars (equal to ¼ USA dollars) to do so. They were allowed to sell their lands, but not to buy.

Arabs were given free grants and lands to come to live in Kirkuk in order to change the demographic nature of the city.

After Saddam's ruling period in 2003, the situation of Turkmens has not been better off, with many feeling that the post-Saddam period is worse under Kurdish control; when Kurds took control of Kirkuk, all the government buildings, empty houses as well as the military campuses, were turned into houses for Kurdish families which were also brought illegally to change the demographics of the city. This was done in a very speedy way.

There were thousands of disputed lands and assets confiscated from Turkmen citizens during the Ba'ath regime, which have not been returned back to their original owners, in Tal Afar, Erbil, Mosul, Kirkuk, Yayachi, Tassain, Turklan, Taza, Tuzkhormatu and many other Turkmen towns and villages.

Year	Iraqi Population	Turkmen Population
1947	3.468.000	280.130
1957	6.276.000	467.000/567.000
1987/ British Inquiry J	18.000.000	1.500.000-2.000.000
Current	35.000.000	>3.000.000

Figure1: Iraqi Population and Turkmen Population

IV. Language of Turkmens

The main spoken language in Turkmen Eli (Turkmen homeland) is a Turkmen dialect. This is a part of the Western Turkish language group that also includes Turkish spoken in Turkey, Cyprus, the Balkans, Iranian Azerbaijan (south) and Republic of Azerbaijan (north), northern Syria, Iran, Turkmenistan and southern Turkistan (northern Afghanistan). The Turkmen language, with its various accents, is closer to the Turkish spoken language in both Azerbaijan

(Republic of Azerbaijan, Azerbaijan of Iran) and Urfa in southeastern Turkey rather than the Turkmen language in the Republic of Turkmenistan.[3]

Spoken language is the foundation of Iraqi Turkmen culture, folk literature, group identity, ethnic consciousness and world outlook.

The spoken mother tongue is naturally passed on to new generations and this, naturally, creates a strong bond uniting the Turkish-speaking peoples of Iraq. However, there is a group of Turkmen called Christian Turkmen of Kirkuk Castle “Kala Gaweri”, which has, for centuries, lived in Kirkuk among Turkmen. They have their own script, bible and mourning songs. However, all these activities are practiced in the Turkmen language.

Unfortunately, compulsory education in Arabic has led to the weakening and deterioration of the spoken Turkish from generation to generation. In fact, the older generation with no formal education speaks relatively pure and more correct Turkish.

Formal written Turkish is the second major source of the Turkish language in Iraq. Local dialects have not found their place in written literature. Turkmen have adopted formal Anatolian Turkish as the written language. Up until the 16th Century, the literary works of Turkmen were written in Azeri dialect, but from the second half of that century onwards, the written literature of Turkmen came under influence of the rising Ottoman language, a western Turkish dialect. However, after the First World War with the separation of Turkey, Turkmen have continued with their preference of Anatolian Turkish by using Arabic letters.

V. Geographical Location of Turkmen

For centuries, Turkmen territories were considered as a buffer zone separating Arabs from Kurds. Cultural, social, religious, economic and political factors have considerably influenced the relations and distribution of the population of Turkmen in the area. The Turkmen of Iraq are mainly merchants, manual labourers and professionals.

Turkmen are concentrated mainly in the northern and central regions of Iraq. This is a diagonal strip of land stretching from Telfar at the north Syrian border to Diayla in the middle part of Iraq.[4]

In this region, there are several major cities and some smaller districts, where Turkmen are living. These are mainly four provinces of Iraq; Erbil, Kirkuk, Saladin and Diyala. In addition to these, historically Turkmen-populated areas have encompassed Telfar; the towns and villages around Mosul such as Al Rashadiya, Shierkan, Nabi Yunis; villages of Shabak around Erbil, Kupery, Kirkuk city, Tassain, Tazakurmatoo, Dakook (Taook), Bashir, Tuzkhoramtu, Amerli, Bastamali, Yengaja, Brawachilli, Karanaz, Shasewan, and many other villages around Amerli, Kifri, Karatappa, Karaghan (Jalwalaa), Sharaban (Magdadia), Kizilarbatt

(Alsayadia), Kanakeen, Mandeli, Kazania.

An estimate of ¼ million Turkmen lives in the capital city Baghdad too; in Ragiba Katoon, Al Fathal, Al Aathamia, Alsalyiagh, Kanbar Ali, Hay Adan, Zyuna, Hay Oor, Alshahab city and in other places of Al karagh part of Baghdad.

There are Turkmen in other middle and southern part of Iraq as well, from Albayat, Alkarghol, Alsalahi, Al Amerli, and Alatrachji, settled in Babal, Al Messan, Karbala and Basra.

Turkmens, are known as a community greatly attached to their national consciousness, tradition and religion.

Turkmen Towns in Iraq Where we Live

Turkmen resides in 4 provinces;
Mosel, Erbil, Kirkuk, Salahadin, Diyala
Turkmen of Mosel city: Shirikan, Telfar,
Salamia, Rashadia

Erbil city: Altokopri
Kirkuk city:
Alton Koupri, Zazakurmato, Dakuk, Al Immam,
Basheer, Aldibis

Salahadin
Tuzkurmato, Yengaja, Bastimalli, Brawchilli,
Amerli/ 42 Villages
Diyala:
Kifri, Qura Tappa, Kanakeen
Shahraban/Al Magdadia, Kizil Bart, Saadyia



Figure: 2

This map adapted from: Iraqi Turkmen, by Mofak Salman

VI. Turkmen Families and their Social Life

There are some similarities between Turkmen society and Arabic and also Kurdish societies.

In the rural areas, it is mostly tribal, where people and head of families will be loyal to their head of the tribe. You find out that the family will be proud of their origins and they are using their tribal titles and families' name, –some of the names may come from their grandfathers or great grandfathers' names. There are some positive aspects for such allegiances, where the families will be competing for various economic, social and political affairs. However, there are some negative aspects such that they have to be adherent to their cultural rules such as paying a ransom or using these tribes as a means of gaining political or economic gain. Unfortunately, this issue has been recently used and also during the Ba'ath era to gain political seats in parliament.

Turkmen people living in urban parts and cities are more loyal to their families than to their tribes. In recent days, this issue may have contributed to Turkmen's losing in the elections and failure of a fairer representation.

Turkmens appear to be weak in such gains, as they have been divided amongst themselves, between, religious groups, some being Sunni and others Shia, and some being secular against being Islamic, while others being with the extremist versus moderate

groups. Some are nationalist and others are loyal to Turkey. All above issues have caused significant damages to the whole of Turkmen society in the recent political climate of the new Iraqi political system.

Another reason that Turkmen have been less represented is that Turkmen have lived in harmony with other groups such as Arabs, Kurds and Christians, Shabaks, Yazidis in Mosul province and in the past with Jewish community. Turkmen people accepted the intermarriage between themselves and other communities which may have led to further underrepresentation as well.

VII. Turkmen Living in Harmony with Other Iraqi Ethnic Groups

There are, until today, Christian Turkmen who live in Kirkuk old Castle (Kirkuk Kala). Turkmen have lived in harmony with Jewish people, especially before 1948, as since then, most of them have left Iraq for Israel. Turkmen were and are easy to mix with and live in harmony with Arabs and Kurds, through intermarriages happening between Sunni and Shia as well as with other ethnic groups.

The old religions of the Turkmen were Al Shamaniya, Judaism, Buddhism and Zaradishet, but Turkmen converted to Islam after Islamic forces' conquest of central.[5]

The majority of Turkmen are Muslims and they are divided into two Muslim faiths: Shiite and Sunni. In addition, there are about 30,000 Christian "catholic" Turks living in Iraq. They are called the Kala Gaweri.

These two Turkmen Muslim and Christian sects helped Turkmen to be more dynamic in the Iraqi society. They facilitated mixed marriages with Arabs and Kurds; therefore, there are a large number of Arab tribes who have originated from Turkmen, such as Albayati. There is no difference at all between the Sunni and Shiite Turkmen regarding the dialogue, language or culture. Intermarriage between the Shiite and Sunni Turkmen is very common. However, some Kurdish militias are trying to utilize various methods to divide the Turkmen community by carrying out a policy of divide and conquer.

VIII. Turkmen's Contributions for Building up Iraqi Society

There are many well-announced Turkmen scholars who contributed to various fields of education, culture, academia, military and medical for building up Iraqi civilization in the recent history of Iraq.

Professor Mustafa Jawad, Dr. Ihsan Aldogramachi , who was the ambassador of UNICEF, lived in Turkey and refused to be Turkish President. Dr. Salam Al Dogramachi was one of the leading professors in pediatric oncology and hematology in Iraq for many years.

Turkmens gave birth to two well-known poets, like Fazooly Al Baghdadi who has been buried in the Imam Hussain's Mosque in Karbala.

Dr. Sinnan Saeed was one of the first PhD scholars in media studies, who first put the corner stone of Iraqi media in Baghdad University in 1975.

Dr. Ibrahim Al Dakookly wrote the first letter in Al Aalam in Arab world, 1972, he produced weekly newspaper, and first news journal about role of Media in Arab world.

IX. Modern History of the Iraqi Turkmens

Many considered the maintenance of Iraq's territorial integrity as a critical issue due to the knowledge of the country's enormous ethnic and religious diversity. One must also take into account the aspirations of these groups and the problems they are facing now. For better understanding, this historical period will be divided into four stages.[6]

1. Post-Ottoman Empire (1924-1958)

Over the twentieth century, and until now, Turkmens have been subject to many atrocities and programmed aggressions, starting with the massacre of 1924 in Kirkuk, to Kwar Baghi events in 1946, and the massacre of 1959.

Under the Iraqi constitution of 1925, both Turkmens and Kurds had the right to use their own languages in schools, government offices and press.

It is stated in the Royal Constitution, which was valid until 1958, that the Iraqi State consisted of Arabs, Kurds, Turkmens and other minorities.

According to Article 14 of the same constitution, Turks, like other minorities, were also entitled to receive an education in their own language and to be in charge of their own educational institutions. In fact, until the proclamation of the republic, various constitutional amendments did not cause ethnic or political discrimination.

The military coup of 1958, that toppled the monarchy, brought a glimpse of hope for Turkmens at first when they heard radio announcements by coup leader General Abdul-Kerim Qasim and his deputy General Abdul-Salam Arif that Iraq was made up of three main ethnic groups: Arab, Kurd and Turkmen. Turkmens interpreted these statements as the end of the suppression. However, happy days did not last long.

2. Post-Monarchy (1958-1970)

As a result of the general amnesty, once Kurdish leader Mullah Mustafa Barzani returned from the Soviet Union, he started negotiations for an autonomous Kurdish region. This has increased the tension in the region and, as the result of this incitement, for the

first time in history, clashes between Turkmens and Kurds took place with heavy casualties. When the new regime decided to steer a policy independent of other influential Arab states, the Communist Party and Kurds gained favour with the political ascendancy, and, soon afterwards, Turkmens in Kirkuk were attacked on the false pretext that they helped the Mosul resistance.

On 14th July, 1959, Kirkuk was put under curfew and its population slaughtered by Communists and Kurds. When 25 innocent Turkmen civilians were killed and 130 people were injured in day light in streets of Kirkuk, this was known to be one of the city's most brutal moments in history.

This massacre was totally disregarded by the world that turned a blind eye to it. It was only after this massacre that the Communist Kurds became so bold as to ask for the inclusion of Kirkuk in their autonomous region under negotiations. Attempts by the Iraqi government to restrict the operations of foreign oil companies and its threats towards Kuwait's oil put it at loggerheads with other Arab countries and Great Britain.

The ensuing era of General Abdul- Salam Arif (1963-1967) was one of the best periods for the Turkmens in Iraq. Turkmens were allowed to operate cultural associations and schools, publish magazines and newspapers in the Latin characters of Turkish, and get some posts in government. They demonstrated excellently that as citizens of Iraq, they could work for their country and live in cooperation with other Iraqis.

3. Arabization Period (1970-2003)

Then, the Ba'ath party rule, commencing in 1968, opened one of the darkest chapters in Turkmen history. The Ba'ath party forced people to sign petitions asking for the closure of Turkish language schools, and to appoint Arab administrators in Turkmen areas. Boycotts by Turkmens were suppressed in a bloody means.

Many Turkmen traders and professionals were captured and imprisoned. In early 1970, Mr. Mohammad Salah, who was the Head of Kirkuk Trade Union was the first Iraqi executed by Ba'ath rulers together with many Turkmen intellectuals and human rights activists.

In 1971, the Artist Hussain Ali Damerchi was killed along with many students, teachers, and professionals after peaceful demonstration, as the Turkmen speaking schools were abolished and all Turkmen rights were cancelled after only a year of having been issued.

In November 1979, four of most influential Turkmen people were captured: Dr. Najidat Kojak, Professor in Engineering College of Baghdad University; Abdullah Abdul Al Rahman, who was a retired general, who was the chair of Turkmen Brotherhood Club; Professor Raza Damerchi, the Chief Director of Forests, in Iraqi Agriculture Ministry and the well-known trade man, Adaal Sherif.

They were subject of worst physical abuse and torture and later in January 1980, they were killed without even charging them with any criminal charges or court proceedings.

The 1980s saw the execution of countless Turkmen leaders and elders who were, often falsely, accused of spying for Turkey or Iran. During the Iran-Iraq war, dozens of Turkmen villages were totally bulldozed to the ground. Many young Turkmen people (from the Shia community) were captured, they disappeared from Telfar, Kirkuk, Tasseen, Bashir, Dakook, Tuzkhormatu, Tazakurmatoo, Amerli, Quratappa, Kifiri, Kanakeen, Mandeli, Kazania, Baghdad. Some were accused of being part of Islamic movements and of being loyal to Iran and others accused of being loyal to Turkish government.

Mr. Aziz Alsamanji in his book published in 1999 in London, “The political history of Turkmen of Iraq”, a list of 283 Turkmen people were executed by Saddam’s regime between 1980-1990.[7] Furthermore, he published another list of 75 Turkmens who were killed by shooting in the uprising of 28th of March 1991. All of those people were professionals, university students and other served in the military services. He documented a further list of 103 Turkmens who were imprisoned, and another 13 people who disappeared and never returned to the families.

Mofak Salman wrote in his book, that the Turkmen Cultural Directorate that was set up by the government to bring Turkmens under strict control was not working according to the government plans.[8] Therefore, the Iraqi government started a new strategy to replace all Turkmen teachers with Arab teachers; they also sent all Turkmen teachers to non-Turkmen areas. An all-out assimilation campaign against Turkmens was unleashed. Young Turkmen people holding university degrees were given jobs in non-Turkmen areas. Arabs were encouraged to settle in Turkmen areas with rewards of 15,000 Iraqi Dinars to each person. Those Arabs who bought farmlands were offered an extra reward ranging between 7,000 and 10,000 Dinars (approximately \$30,000), and the lands confiscated from Turkmens under various pretexts, were given to Arabs.

Young Arab men were encouraged to marry Turkmen girls with offers of 10,000 Iraqi Dinars. All this was designed to change the demographic balance of the Turkmen-dominated region, with its capital city Kirkuk.

This was followed by government decrees that changed Kirkuk’s name to that of Al-Tamim and also changed its administrative borders, taking other Turkmen towns like Tuzkhormatu and Kifri from Kirkuk to other provinces.

Subsequently, the Ba’ath government banned the use of the Turkmen language in public. Religious leaders who did not speak Arabic, were forced to deliver sermons in Arabic, and when they failed to, they were executed.

While the Islamic Union of Iraqi Turkmens, in their well-documented book, published in detail, the name of 432 Turkmen people, who were executed and assassinated by Saddam's regime between 1979-1991.[9]

The Chief of Iraqi Revolution, said to the retired General Abdul Hussain Mula Ibrahim originally from Tuzkhormatu, when he read his execution order, that he should be hanged and killed twice, once for being Turkmen and second time for being Shia. However, Abdul Hussain could not tolerate the brutality and passed away from the torture.

Turkmens have been severely intimidated into silence, and they have been waiting helplessly, not knowing what to do. Here, I would like to mention the 1987 national census in Iraq, as it is relevant to a number of ethnic groups. In this census, Turkmens were openly threatened to declare themselves as either Arabs or Kurds. If they declared themselves as Turkmens, they would be deported to Saudi.

As a result of Erbil events in 31th August 1996, many Turkmens were captured, and on 2nd September 1996, 25 Turkmen citizens were executed.[10]

The decomposition of the Iraqi Turkmens was an Iraqi policy inherited from one government to the subsequent one. The aim was to remove Turkmens from the oil-rich northern region and to disperse them to the south of Iraq.

4. Targeting Turkmens after 2003 (Kurdization)

After 2003, Shiite Turkmens have been a target of systematic terror attacks in various ways, although the attack seems mainly on Shiite Turkmens, however Sunni Turkmens also had their own share as people are mixed together, living next to each other and married to each other. All Turkmen areas indiscriminately had many attacks from Telfar, Erbil, Mosul, Kirkuk, especially Tassin area, Bashir, Taza, Tuzkhormatu, and Amerli.[11] These are some example of atrocities but not the exhausted list of all the attacks.

4.1. Kirkuk

From 2003 onwards, the Iraqi Turkmens have continued to be subjected to targeted campaigns of intimidation, assimilation, kidnapping, threatening and land confiscation practices, which have resulted in wide-scale emigration. Moreover, Turkmen political actors are often targeted based on their ethnicity, religion and political opinion. In 2011, e.g., the headquarters of the Iraqi Turkmen Front in Kirkuk were completely demolished by explosives. Many university students, scholars, lectures were attacked and killed.

Many Turkmen doctors and professionals were target of killing and kidnapping, almost all of them received letters asking them to leave or pay a ransom. It is estimated that Turkmens paid more than 50

million US dollars until today many medical colleagues left as result of such indiscriminate threats.[12] Indeed many young doctors and university graduates left to other parts of Iraq if not to Turkey or elsewhere in the world.

A report from Iraqi Turkmen Doctors Association reported that Turkmen medical sector specifically, were a target for abductions, kidnapping and assassinations in Kirkuk to drain the city from their minds and intellect. They listed 46, most of whom were Turkmen doctors from Kirkuk alone, who were kidnapped and ransomed for \$10,000-50,000 for their release; some of whom were killed and others left the city for good.[13]

In Kirkuk, 95% of the terror attacks targeted Turkmens, Turkmen neighborhoods left no protection despite the heavily presences of security forces which are protecting non-Turkmen neighbourhoods like Kurdish residential areas, and this is exactly what is happening and happened in Tuzkurmatu town.

4.2. Telfar

On 9th of September 2004 and 5th September 2005, Telfar was attacked by tanks, helicopters, soldiers, leaving 1,350 dead people and 2,650 injured, including many children, women and elderlies. During this period more than 48,000 families were displaced from Telfar.

While Telfar was a site of daily attacks of car bombs, kidnapping, killing by various methods, on 9th of July 2009 two suicide bombers killed themselves in the middle of the town, killing more than 34 people and injured hundreds with many houses and belongings were destroyed.

4.3. Tazakhormatu

It is located 20 km south of Kirkuk and it had its own share from terror attacks, on 20th of July 2009, a large explosion of a trailer in the middle of busy market similar to Amerli attack, killed 82 persons and injured 228 people and many shops, and more than 80 houses were collapsed.

4.4. Tuzkhormatu

Countless Turkmen people from Tuzkhormatu were killed and targeted by various terrorist attacks, from kidnapping, road side bombs, car bombs, suicide bombers, head hunting and targeted explosions of their houses and neighborhoods. Explosion of Mosques, worship places like Hussinyia, even nurseries and primary schools and high schools were targets, killing innocent children and people regardless. All these attacks were mainly in the streets of Turkmen neighbourhood.

In January 2013, a suicide bomber exploded himself in the middle of gathering of funeral, killed more than 42 people and injured more than 70 people.

13 of June another deadly suicide bomber attack on peaceful demonstration in Tuzkurmatu killed the Iraqi Turkmen Front Vice president Ali Hashim Mukhtar Oglu with other 13 TurkmenS prominent people and injured more than 30 people.

July 2013, a massive car bomb exploded in 5 a.m. while people sleeping in their beds, in a Turkmen neighbourhood, killed 12 people, children, elderly and young people regardless and more than 20 houses were destroyed with more than 50 people who got injured.

More than 1,500 Turkmen people killed in Tuz, and more than 1,000 houses were destroyed and more than thousands of families were forced to leave their homeland and to move to the south especially to Karbala and Baghdad as they were being fearful of their lives.

It was reported that, between January 2013 and August 2013; “Three hundred attacks took place in the province of Kirkuk”, with “Two hundred seventy attacks” were in Salah al-Din, mainly in Tuzkhourmatu.

4.5. Amerli

A small district located 20 km south of Tuzkhourmatu, which is 80 km south of Kirkuk city. In July 2007, Amerli was subject to a deadly trailer bomb explosion in the middle of a busy market where 160 civilians were killed, more than 300 people were wounded and more than 100 were destroyed. The attack left behind many widowed, orphaned and disabled children and adults. Since then many young people and professionals were targets for deliberate killing on their way to work between Amerli, Tikirit and Kirkuk .

X. Recent Atrocities against Turkmens by Islamic State of Iraq and Sham (ISIS)

Moreover, the recent rapid rise of the ISIS in Iraq has left the state in chaos and its minorities extremely vulnerable, of which in particular Turkmens and Assyrians, as they do not have their own security forces. Reportedly, on 15th June 2014, ISIS fighters took over Telfar, which is mostly populated by Turkmens. In total, 100 people were killed and 200.000 people are estimated to have fled Telfar according to Human Rights Watch.[14] ISIS forces kidnapped at least 40 Shiite Turkmens and ordered 950 Shiite Turkmen families to leave the villages of Guba and Shireekhan. Many more than 100 Turkmen families were forced from Al Rashidya village, and other Turkmen villages around Mosul (UN Report, 2014). In another report, an estimate of 350,000 Turkmen people from Telfar were displaced.

Bashir a district located at southwest of Kirkuk city, is one of the Shiite Turkmen villages, which were destroyed when Saddam forced their habitants to leave, confiscated their lands, killed many youth and imprisoned others. After 2003, many orders from central government were dismissed and local Arab tribes who took over

Bashir lands refused to leave.

On 12th and 13th of June 2014, ISIS terrorists attacked Bashir civilians, kidnapping, killing, abducting, raping children and women. Mosques and worship places were destroyed, 59 people, including three children and women were killed. Little girls and young women were raped and then killed and their corpses were hung from the lamp posts. Around 1000 families fled from Bashir.

Macro Babilie; the United Nations children's fund representative in Iraq, said; that *"ISIS militants have massacred 700 Turkmen civilians, including women, children and the elderly, in a northern Iraqi village, Bashir between July 11 and 12"*.

Brawachilli and many other villages around Amerli were attacked, people were killed indiscriminately including, sick, children, women and elderly, some people managed to escape their villages by leaving behind the most vulnerable to be abused and killed. Their houses, mosques, lands and livestock were destroyed.

Amerli was under siege for 80 days (17/06/2014-31/08/14) under harsh inhumane conditions, with food, water and electricity supplies were cut off. 20,000 people were under daily attacks. More than 50 children, along of 10 new born babies lost their lives in one day as result of lack of milk and nutrition, more than 100 people were, perished as result of the siege and daily attacks.

Michael Knights is a Boston-based Lafer fellow of the Washington Institute, in his article (Iraq's City of Orphans), urged US government to rescue Amerli people and argued why the international communities ignored thousands more Iraqi communities of Amerli.

Michael stated in his article that saving Iraqi Turkmens is a Win-Win-Win. A U.S.-backed effort to save besieged Iraqi Turkmens in the Tuzkhurmatu district could bring Baghdad, the Kurds, and Turkey into a joint fight against the ongoing jihadist offensive.[15]

Ayatullah Ali Sistani, Shiite Muslims' most influential scholar, said through his representative, Abd al-Mehdi al-Karbalai that *"we appeal to the relevant sides to work sincerely in breaking the siege. [We also call for] saving the brave town's citizens from the dangers of the terrorists"*. Ayatullah Sistani added, *"the speeding up of the air delivery of food to the people of Amerli is a top priority"*. [16]

The people of Amerli, with their determination, defeated ISIS by defending themselves with the help of Iraqi coalitions from various groups and Kurdish Peshmerga as well as with the help of international communities from the USA, and other Western countries.

The American help to save Amerli came very late, which left some doubts in the minds of many Turkmens as to the intentions of America in supporting Turkmens in their struggle.

Amerli was the first town in Iraq stood bravely against the atrocities

of ISIS. As Mr. Knight predicted that Iraqis with its various fractions including Kurds came together to defend and fight against the evil ISIS. However, the Turkish government was no longer interested in helping Turkmens any more for reasons out of scope of this review.

Reports from Turkmen Front, human right office in London, June 2014 and from Beladi Strategic Center, said that “*the human misery and severe human suffering continue in the Turkmen towns and cities after the invasion of the ISIS, especially in Telfar, Shirghan, Qura Quyan, Bashir, Tazakurmatu, Tuzkurmatu, as well as Al Bayat villages and towns around Tuzkurmatu in Salahadin, other villages and towns around Mosul, Al Sa’dia district and other villages in Diyala province*”.^[17]

The above communities have suffered from killings via car bombs, suicide bombers, road side bomb explosions as well explosions of their houses by various means prior to the above events. Many loved ones have been killed, and hundreds disabled, leaving behind numerous widows, and orphans, let alone the daily mental anguish and fear of what will happen next. However, these atrocities have not affected Turkmens alone, but later others; Christians and Yazidi ethnic minorities, Shabak and Kurd Shia Faili were targeted as well.^[18]

XI. Conclusion

The Iraqi Turkmens have suffered immensely from intimidation by the central government, Kurds and extrajudicial militia groups for religious and ethnic reasons, ‘Arabization’ assimilation policies during the Saddam Hussein regime, and the “Kurdization” policy after 2003.

Since 2003, various groups, including extrajudicial militia, have targeted Turkmens via car bombings, assassinations, kidnappings, arbitrary arrests, harassment and torture, with impunity and torture.

The most recent events by ISIS attacks on Turkmens did not come as a surprise; it is an extension of decades of assimilations, intimidations by Arabs and Kurds, in order to forcefully displace them from their motherland where they had been living for centuries.

The official combination of the assimilation policy and the decomposition policy was successfully played out for years, but assimilation and decomposition would not have been enough to erase or eradicate Turkmens and the languages of the Iraqi Turkmens.

There is no evident sign that official Turkish positions on the Iraqi Turkmens will change. However, changes to improve the present conditions and to solve the Iraqi Turkmen problems within the Iraqi sovereignty may be timely, especially with a view to the Kurdish Spring in northern Iraq. The Kurdish Spring encouraged by the United States, the European Union, Russia and others needs to be

emulated by the Iraqi Turkmens who cannot afford to be isolated from northern Iraq geographically or politically, and, least of all, economically.

It is very clear that various policy makers of Western countries calling to divide Iraq into three states of: Arab Shias in the south, Kurds in the north and Sunnis in the west, ignoring the human rights and existence of the original Turkmen people in this land and other ethnic minorities. However, Turkmens should not be seen as a danger to Iraqi sovereignty but as a credit to strengthen Iraqi stability and as a part of the big mosaic of Iraqi unity. The Iraqi government must guarantee human rights for all citizens, regardless of ethnicity, and reach an agreement about these issues, with representation from Kurds, Turkmens and Arabs. They should present a regional security plan in which the Turkmens are given a role to play. The second stipulation concerning Turkmens is that the world should be reminded of Turkmens' presence in Iraq. Baghdad should be aware of this presence, and it should be noted that providing certain rights and guarantees to Turkmens would contribute to the ending of the division of the country.

Above all, Turkmen people themselves need to wake up, with its various fractions; Shia, Sunni, Muslim and non-Muslim should come together and extend their hands to each other in order to help their wounded and shattered people with many, orphaned children and women who were left defenseless and who were struggling day by day. To take them back to their own home land.

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