

## **An evaluation of Turkey's 'Turkmen Policy' (Part V): An approach of the Iraqi Turkmen Human Rights Research Foundation**

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The Iraqi Turkmen human rights research foundation, which is known as (SOITM), was instituted during a very difficult period of Turkmen and Iraqi history.<sup>1</sup> Iraq was suffering under the oppression of a dictator and from the international community's punishments and the Turkmen of Iraq became victims of actual ethnic cleansing processes. After having suffered from cruelties inflicted by the Baghdad authorities, the Kurdish parties however started governing their region. In fact, the Kurdish authorities replaced the dictatorial Ba'ath regime and oppressed the other non-Kurdish communities, particularly the Turkmen.<sup>2</sup>

SOITM, realizing the difficulties of its mission, started its activities in 2002, by monitoring and documentation of human rights violations and the subsequent preparation of reports and articles to enlighten the international community on the situation.

Due to the lack of resources on the Iraqi Turkmen in the western and international libraries, SOITM started to prepare articles on Turkmen history, its geography and population. SOITM also prepared reports on other Iraqi minorities. As SOITM addresses the international community and the Arabic world, it adopts English as its official language and uses it in its activities and in the preparation of reports and articles. SOITM additionally uses the Arabic language in its publications.

The following are some of the activities which SOITM realized:

- SOITM produced approximately one hundred reports and articles on the human rights situation and other issues related to the Turkmen of Iraq. Some of these reports were translated to different languages. Part of SOITM's publications was published in a book titled "The Turkmen of Iraq: Underestimated, Marginalized and exposed to Assimilation".<sup>3</sup>
- SOITM participated in ten sessions of the different working groups of the United Nations: Sessions of the working group on the minorities, sessions of the working group on indigenous populations, and sessions of the human rights council.
- SOITM attended various events which were organized by European organizations about Iraq.
- SOITM met more than a hundred parliamentarians in the European parliament and in the parliaments of European countries enlightening them particularly on the situation of the Iraqi Turkmen and other components of the Iraqi community.
- SOITM organized meetings and exchanged letters with:
  - o Ministries for foreign affairs of several European countries and several embassies in The Hague.
  - o Between SOITM representatives from different Turkmen regions and United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq.
  - o Different United Nations authorities and international media, civil society and human rights organizations, and academics.
- SOITM organized:
  - o Two conferences in collaboration with UNPO, about the situation of the Iraqi Turkmen at the European parliament.<sup>4 5</sup>
  - o A conference for the Turkmen Human Rights activists in Europe.
  - o Several conferences for Turkmen civil society organizations in the Netherlands
- SOITM Issues:

- SOITM website, a website ([www.turkmen.nl/](http://www.turkmen.nl/)) which publishes its reports and articles, publications of Turkmen writers and also other important publications on the Turkmen of Iraq.
- Turkmen Tribune website, a daily electronic newspaper in Arabic which has been effective since 2010. ([www.turkmentribune.com/](http://www.turkmentribune.com/))
- Iraqi Turkmen Journal, a weekly electronic journal in Arabic (for two years from 2003 to 2005) ([www.turkmen.nl/index75.html](http://www.turkmen.nl/index75.html))

After several years of hard work in the international arena, SOITM realized that the major cause of the failure of the Turkmen policy is the disorganization and dispersion of the Turkmen political structure and the absence of an independent Turkmen political system. It can be easily concluded that this is the main cause of the disasters which the Iraqi Turkmen have had to confront. Hence, the Turkmen failed to retrieve their human rights which were usurped during the Ba'ath regime and at the same time were exposed to aggressive violations of their human rights.

A glance at the Turkmen political history and a simple search for the causes of their failure in building an independent Turkmen political system enlighten the major role of Turkey in this context. Turkey has dominated the Turkmen political system since 1990, before which the Turkmen of Iraq were completely ignored by Turkey.

After realizing this fact, SOITM approved the idea that "The Turkey should change its policy towards the Turkmen". This was expressed by SOITM in every talk with Turkmen politicians and intellectuals. Additionally, SOITM adopted the mission to further research the Turkish unconstructive role and enlighten the Turkmen community about the factors which prevented the structuring of the Turkmen political system and hampered its development.

SOITM started writing a series of confidential articles under the general title "An evaluation of Turkey's 'Turkmen Policy'" in 2008. Until now four articles have been written and distributed to a very limited number of Turkmen politicians, writers and intellectuals and to the Turkish and other kin country's authorities, such as Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan. The first article was only published after a year of internal circulation. Two of these articles were translated to Arabic and Turkish and the other two will be translated in the future.

The titles of the articles are:

- An evaluation of Turkey's 'Turkmen Policy' (Part I): The unconstructive role of the Iraqi Turkmen Front within the Turkmen Policy.<sup>6</sup>
- An evaluation of Turkey's 'Turkmen policy' (Part II): The Turkmen of Iraq are Victims of subordination and deteriorated national politics
- An evaluation of Turkey's 'Turkmen policy' (Part III): Turkey opens another rift in the fragile Turkmen political system
- An evaluation of Turkey's 'Turkmen policy' (Part IV): Lacking the most basic elements of ethics
- An evaluation of Turkey's 'Turkmen policy' (Part Upcoming): The unconstructive role of the Turkey in structuring and functioning of the fragile political system of the Iraqi Turkmen.

The Evaluation of Turkey's 'Turkmen Policy' (part II) was sent to about seventy addresses including the highest Turkmen politicians, writers and opinion leaders which mostly confirmed the entire information presented in the article. This shows that despite the Turkmen realization of the harmful role of Turkey in the administration of the Turkmen political system, they are unable to intervene or do not dare to do so.

After five years work in this field, SOITM is convinced that Turkey is aware of the situation and determines its Turkmen policies purely in adherence with Turkish national interests and therefore has no desire to change its Turkmen policy.

In view of the above stated facts and problems, SOITM urges:

- The Turkmen politicians and intellectuals:
  - o To reevaluate Turkey's Turkmen policy in light of the information provided in the reports of SOITM and to intervene to change it.
  - o To abandon their subordination to Turkey. This deprives them from getting supports of national, regional and international powers and brings animosity.
- To return their usurped rights and get their human rights in a unified democratic Iraq are the strategic Turkmen goals which are legitimate rights. This makes it easier to get the support of national, regional and international powers. Accordingly the Turkmen politicians should work to get the support of all the powers in the region.
- The governments of akin countries like, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan, to help the Turkmen and persuade Turkey to change its harmful Turkmen policy.
- The international community, the national, regional and international powers to take into account the information presented in the articles of SOITM in building their policies towards Iraq.

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**References:**

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6. Article of SOITM, "An Evaluation of Turkey's Turkmen Policy (Part I): The unconstructive role of the Iraqi Turkmen Front within the Turkmen Policy" dated 22<sup>th</sup> February 2008, [http://www.turkmen.nl/1A\\_soitm/Rep.6-B2208.pdf](http://www.turkmen.nl/1A_soitm/Rep.6-B2208.pdf)