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The most difficult time for the non-Kurdish components in the north of Iraq: Is it the disputed areas or seized areas?

Unfortunately, Iraqis have lived for years with the suffering of decades of dictatorship, war, economic embargo, and most recently the U.S. occupation. This long period has psychologically and physically exhausted Iraqi people from all its communities.

Despite all these disasters that befell Iraq, Iraqis continue to rebuild their country and sympathizers among the global and regional powers have been involved in helping Iraq with moral and material aid to build the bases of the new Iraqi state. The Iraqis are determined to build a democratic Iraq and a culture of human rights. With the support and concern of the world, particularly that of the West, hoped that they have the same goals and targets, they will establish the cornerstones of democracy in the Middle East.

But the problems faced by Iraqis after the occupation are numerous. The sectarian religious and ethnic racism are of the most important of these problems. It was the cause of imbalance, political instability and insecurity, and had an effective role in economic instability, which negatively impacted all areas of daily life.

The religious sectarianism and tendency for reprisals are considered the basic causes of the killing of dozens, or even hundreds, of Iraqis every day for years during and after the U.S. occupation. At a time when national and international efforts are concentrated on stopping the bloodshed in central Iraq, there continue to be systematic violations of human rights in those areas of northern Iraq under the control of the Kurdish parties, backed by the Peshmerga militia and security units.

In northern Iraq live the majority of country's diverse ethnic and religious communities: Shabaks, Yazidis, Chaldo-Assyrians, Turkmen, Kurds and Arabs. Regardless of their respective sizes, the standard of living of everyone was approximately equal and all suffered the harshness of the former political system. But after 1991, and particularly after the U.S. occupation in 2003, the balance between these components was disturbed.

When the Kurdish Safe Haven was set up, it gave rise to a large gap in the economical, political and even cultural potentials between the Kurdish citizen on one hand and members of other Iraqi communities on the other hand. The result led to the hegemony of the Kurdish racist political parties in northern Iraq.

The most important factors that led to the imbalance between the components in northern Iraq after 1991 are:

- √ While non-Kurdish communities were subjected to decades of suppression, and were unable to directly challenge the Ba'athist Government, the Kurdish community obtained material and moral

support from regional and western powers, facilitating their domination of the reins of power in the northern region.

- √ Establishment of the Safe Haven for the Kurds excluded other Iraqi components whilst handing its administration to the Kurdish tribal and militia-backed political parties which politicized the security services and led to the marginalization of the non-Kurdish communities.
- √ Independent access by the Kurdish nationalist parties to a large proportion of Iraq's national income and their control of revenue from the northern border gate provided the Kurdish authorities with additional sources of finance and strength.

The policy of the Kurdish parties to glorify Kurdish race has led to the preparation of curricula based on incorrect historical and geographical information that encourages the development of a fanatic generation of Kurds ready to quarrel against any people they feel to be threatening their ethnic goals. In these circumstances, Kurdish militias (Peshmerga), Security Services (Asayish) and intelligence agencies (Parastin) were built with the same concepts.

By the time of the 2003 occupation, the Kurdish people had already gained a sense of injustice that their fatherland has been occupied by others and the Kurdish parties and people were convinced of the Kurdish nature of northern Iraq, and in particular the city of Kerkuk. Despite historical and academic sources offering a different opinion, they believe they have the historical right to build their country on vast Iraqi lands. (See references below)

Kurdish man had developed an overwhelming desire to establish a Kurdish state at any cost. The absolute support of the occupation forces to the Kurdish parties and the absence of any authority or rule of law due to demolition of the Iraqi state became as a catalyst for the implementation of these base-less aspirations by the Kurdish authorities. The material and moral support of the West, resulting from sympathy to the Kurdish case after the latter were targeted for their fighting against Saddam Hussein, played a great role in strengthening this rush.

Up to this stage the Kurdish parties and their cadres lacked experience and were characterized by toughness, tribalism, intolerance and inefficiency after having been fighting the Iraqi state amid the rugged mountains for decades. These parties have withdrawn all of these specifications with them into the period of Safe Haven in early nineties and into the after occupation period.

Thus began the most difficult time for the millions of Iraqi non-Kurds who form the majority in northern Iraq. The Kurdish political parties, militias and security services took control of most of the state's civil administration, security, and military departments. Under the supervision of the occupation forces, their control was extended to include more than 75% of the province of Mosul (\pm 3 million inhabitants), 20% of the province of Salah al-Din (\pm 1 million inhabitants) and 90% of the province of Kerkuk (al-Tamim) (830,000 inhabitants) and about 50% of the Diyala province (1.37 million inhabitants), whilst several millions of Arabs, Turkmen, Yazidis and Shabaks are living in these areas. The estimated size of the Kurds in this vast area is thought not to exceed one million inhabitants.

Kurdish control also overwhelmingly dominated those lands outside the Kurdish region that are at the root of plans to annex them to the Kurdish administration. There is pressure on millions of non-Kurdish Iraqis to change their nationality with the aim of changing the demography of the region – aided by the resettlement of Kurdish families and ethnic cleansing.

The first days of occupation

In the absence of state institutions, the looting and burning of government departments began and spread to banks, universities, municipalities and community radio, television and even hospitals. Peshmerga militias seized the wheels of government, of the Ba'ath party and in many cases of non-Kurdish inhabitants. Arabs were forced to leave their villages and had their property appropriated. Large numbers of machines, vehicles and government documents were transferred to Sulaymaniya, Duhok and Erbil.

The Kurdish militia, supported by political parties, also started seizing government buildings in these vast lands, and especially in Kerkuk, sharing these properties among themselves. Many of these buildings were turned into offices or housing for the Kurdish families brought to the region as part of the Kurdification process.

Demographic change

State institutions

Almost all of the Iraqi state institutions have been dismembered and the Iraqi citizens have been psychologically and economically exhausted, making it easier for the Kurdish parties and militias, which were well-armed and organized to enter and extend control over these areas in the four provinces and all of its governmental institutions, under the supervision of the occupying forces. The partisans and members of Kurdish Peshmerga, who did not have the minimum degrees of education, received the top posts in the cities, districts and sub-districts. Consequently, they have been appointed as district and sub-district managers and mayors. Thus, most managers of the state offices come from the ethnic Kurds and they took control of the city councils. Tens of thousands of Kurds had been appointed in the government offices in these vast areas of northern Iraq, where the number of state employees has increased twofold in some regions.

Kurdish nationalism and party affiliation has been adopted the basis for appointments. By these means many non-Kurdish inhabitants were forced to work for the agendas of Kurdish parties away from their parties. Additionally, Kurdish parties seized large numbers of jobs in the Iraqi state, which are disproportional with their size. From the total of 165 senior posts in the Iraqi State, the Kurds hold 65 posts.

Kurdish parties with militias has ruled the northern regions of Iraq in the full absence of state institutions while the concern of the international community and Government of Iraq remained with the fighting and bleeding in the center of the country. In the midst of these circumstances, the rebuilding of all the institutions of the state including the military, security and police systems, was carried out with the intention of 'Kurdifying' the institutions. The staff of the civil service was in many accusations doubled and in addition to the large numbers of Kurdish Peshmerga militias, distributed throughout the governorates, the overwhelming majority of the two Iraqi military brigades stationed in Mosul were Kurdish.

In Kerkuk, the security system has been replaced by hundreds of Kurds, brought from Sulaymaniya, Erbil and Duhok. The majority of officers and members of the police came from the Kurdish parties in Kerkuk province and they control of these devices in most of other regions. The Kurdish parties seized all weapons of the dissolved Iraqi army in the northern regions, which were about more than a quarter of the strength of the total weapon of Iraq - amounting to hundreds of thousands of light and heavy weapons, including tanks and many types of anti-aircraft missiles and mortars, all of which were transferred to the Kurdish provinces.

Two important factors led to replacement of large numbers of qualified personnel in these vast areas by non-qualified Kurds:

- √ The adoption by Kurdish political parties of a concerted Kurdification policy.
- √ The fleeing of large numbers of staff who previously held key positions in government offices .

There was therefore a great need to find qualified replacement personnel but the failure of the Kurdish administration to find such personnel has led to the majority of appointments being made to non-qualified Kurdish staff, who in many cases has not studied in either primary or secondary school. Taxi drivers consequently became police chiefs, while graduates of the Institute of Agriculture became directors in unrelated government offices. Peshmerga militants who have not received any formal training or education held the posts of manager in government offices and the graduates of a primary school became officers in the army, police or security forces.

Hundreds of Kurdish party headquarters backed by militias and security forces have been spread throughout the cities, districts and sub-districts. Kurdish parties spent large sums to recruit a large number of collaborators from other nationalities.

Iraqi elections were held in these vast areas under the control of the Kurdish parties and their militias all of whom do not hide their insistence on the Kurdishness of these areas and of the need to seize it by force if necessary. The population number of Kerkuk province at the day of occupation was 870,000 people. The number of voters in this province became 800,000 in the elections of December 2005.

During the elections, the poverty of non-Kurdish citizens was exploited to obtain their votes after paying symbolic sums to them. Furthermore, large sums have also been paid to many of those who hold important posts for their support for the Kurdish party's agendas. After using all kinds of manipulations and election frauds, the Kurdish parties won in most areas, which increased their control on all key positions in administration and decision-making mechanism in these areas. For example:

- √ The number of Kurds in Nineveh province council was 31 out of 41 members. This was partially due to the Sunni boycott.
- √ In Kerkuk province council, the number of Kurds is 24 out of 41 members.
- √ In Erbil, the sets of provincial council were divided equally between the two Kurdish parties
- √ All members of the City Council of Kifri are of Kurdish ethnicity
- √ In Khanaqin after intimidation and temptation, the representatives of other nationalities in the city council joined to the Kurdish parties.

Kurdish migration

Kurdish parties started with the beginning of the occupation to encourage hundreds of thousands of Kurdish citizens to migrate to new areas that the Peshmerga had entered after the occupation, frequently paying a sum or/and salaries to them. Those who held high positions in the political parties or in Peshmerga militias, acquired finances for the construction of their homes, which are built on the lands of the municipalities, government or non-Kurdish peoples. Hundreds of family members joined those who received new posts and dozens of new neighborhoods have arisen in the cities of these vast areas. The number of Kurds and Turkmen who were removed from Kerkuk by the Baath regime was estimated to 120,000 Kurds but the bulk of those deported from Kerkuk were born in Sulaymaniya or Erbil.

The Kurdified administration forged ration cards and transferred population registration records of the Kurdish people coming to the new areas, in particular that of Kerkuk province. The newcomers were provided with the identity cards and passports but attempts of the Kurdish parties to transfer the population registration records of Shaykhan district to Kurdish Duhok province failed. Thousands of staff

and teachers from the province of Sulaimaniya, Erbil and Dohuk have been appointed to teach the Kurdish language instead of Arabic. Elements of the Peshmerga militias have been fixed in the many checkpoints that have been developed on public roads between many cities like Erbil, Bartalah, Shaykhan and Dohuk.

Thousands of Arab families left these vast areas after the initial entry of Peshmerga militias, while other Arabs left the region after animosity and hostility grew at the same time as the Kurdish militia consolidated their control of the region. In Kerkuk province alone about 25 villages were evacuated of which many had existed before the Ba'ath regime.

Appropriation of lands particularly that of government and inhabitants lands is considered a major characteristic of the period **after** the creation of the Kurdish Safe Haven in these regions, particularly after occupation. The Kurdish parties, which held for the first time the administration of governmental offices in 1991, have lacked the understanding of concept of a state and the management of its institutions. Consequently, the newcomers from the mountainous regions supported by Kurdified administration have captured vast lands belonging to municipalities, government and inhabitants. The share of these lands going to party members and militias was also enormous, for example, the Barzani family seized on the territory of the entire Salah al-Din district. Meanwhile, in Kerkuk province, the Kurdish families have seized on all types of lands and large numbers of buildings. This resulted in the number of lawsuits presented to the Property Claims Commission in Kerkuk province reaching over 40,000 individual cases, most of which related to Turkmen.

Other human rights situations

After occupation, the general situation in northern Iraq was characterized by:

1. Absence of the rule of law and the forces which preserve it
2. Absolute control of the Kurdish parties and militias, which are characterized by:
 - a. Non-democratic tribal mentality
 - b. Lack of professionalism resulting from a lack of education and vocational training
 - c. Tough aggressive nature because of living in the harsh mountainous areas in a state of a war, which lasted for decades
3. The Iraqi State and the international community were engaged to address the disaster caused by the fighting in central Iraq
4. Iraq's other ethnic groups in the region were exhausted as a result of the assimilation policies of former dictatorship.
5. The absence of international human rights organizations and even the United Nations and the lack of monitoring or follow-up has led to lack of registration and documentation of large numbers of violations of human rights for a period of years.

Under these circumstances, although the region did not face a conflict between Sunnis and Shiites, there have been thousands of cases of intimidation, arrests, detention, torture in prisons, kidnapping, assassinations, killings and loss of persons from non-Kurdish ethnic groups and many others who oppose the policies of Kurdification. With the lack of security, thousands of Yezidi, Shabak, Chaldeo-Assyrians, Turkmen and Arab families migrated from the regions where Kurdish Peshmerga militias were in charge of security. Today, it is estimated that 238 people were kidnapped in Kerkuk and there are a lot of abductees who have not been counted.

In these vast regions, the Kurdish security forces (Asayish) have converted the buildings of Ba'ath party into the headquarters for Kurdish militias, where the oppositions were detained. Hundreds of these offices are today scattered east of Mosul city and in the plain of Nineveh, working to suppress the non-Kurdish

population by all types of intimidations. In coordination with the headquarters of the Kurdish parties, the security agents collect information on citizens and prevent the Shabaks and Chaldeo-Assyrians from entering the city of Duhok and other regions and target the Yazidis who reject the dominance of the Kurdish parties.

During the attempts of Kurdish militias to control the district of Tal Afar, which was put in the map of so-called Kurdistan, the region was subjected to two destructive attacks using all types of heavy weapons including tanks and helicopters. As a result, thousands of occupation troops and Kurdish militias swamped the city causing 100,000 inhabitants to leave Telafer. The minor attacks, arrests, assassinations, kidnappings continued for three years. Large numbers of populations are still considered internally displaced.

In 2005, Kurdish militias broke into Turkmen political party buildings and institutions, confiscating twenty-four buildings including, fifteen schools, newspaper, print houses, local radio and television stations and the headquarters of political parties. Turkmen living in Erbil who were not loyal to the Kurdish parties were denied work in government offices. The non-Kurdish inhabitants of all the regions were forced to study Kurdish in schools.

Many Chaldea-Assyrian villages were evacuated, tens of Yazidi politicians were arrested, Shabak activists were assassinated, hundreds of leading Baathists were killed and Turkmen lands were confiscated.

The Kurdish authorities recruited large numbers of collaborators from other communities and used them to establish parties and civil society organizations against their own national parties. These collaborators were used in political companies. Many spied for Kurdish parties. The votes of other communities were bought in the elections.

Names of the cities, streets and buildings were changed from Turkmen or Arabic to Kurdish. The signboards in the governmental offices were written in Kurdish, the non-Kurdish inhabitants greatly suffered particularly in the hospitals.

Domination of the Kurdish parties on the administration in these vast regions led to the revival of the Kurdish neighborhoods and cities and retardation of the development in non-Kurdish regions.

One of the most dangerous phenomena that have begun to emerge in northern Iraq is the large differences in standard of living and economic power between the Kurdish people on one hand and the non-Kurdish people on the other hand. This phenomenon is attributed to the following factors, which should be generalized to the vast regions which the Kurdish militias controlled after occupation:

1. The appointment of hundreds of thousands of Kurds in areas occupied by the Kurdish parties, after the occupation:
 - a. In government offices, for example,
 - i. The appointment of more than ten thousand staff in Kerkuk province, 90% of whom are of Kurdish ethnicity.
 - ii. About two thousand Kurds were appointed in Kara Tepe sub-district.
 - iii. Thousands of Kurdish teachers from Duhok were appointed in Mosul region.
 - b. In the Iraqi army, for example, more than 80% of the two Iraqi army divisions in Mosul are of Kurdish ethnicity.

- c. In security service and police, for example, almost all the security system in Kerkuk province were replaced by Kurds in Kerkuk province
 - d. Increase in the number of Peshmerga militias, for example, the recruitment of tens of thousands of Peshmerga militants in 2004 - 2005
 - e. Appointments in Kurdish regions, for example, being it is based on the party affiliation; there are about million staffs in Kurdish regions who are also members of Kurdish parties. In contrary, the number of non-Kurdish appointments is severely restricted.
2. Kurdish authorities:
 - a. Receive 13% of Iraq's income since mid 1990s, while the other communities receive no share. Despite the important decline in the number of Kurds in the three Kurdish provinces after occupation, the Kurdish share increased to 17% of the total Iraqi budget and other Iraqi communities have remained deprived of any share.
 - b. Collect massive sum from Khabour border crossing since 1991, where almost all the Iraqi imports were entering.
 3. Kurdish domination on the governmental offices in the north of Iraq has brought another economic benefit to the Kurdish people. Since occupation and in these vast regions, the Kurdified administrations gave thousands projects to the Kurdish contractors who use the Kurdish officials and Kurdish workers.

These are the developments in the north of Iraq since the occupation and for a period of six years, where the Kurds dominate economy, civil, military, security administrations working to subdue the non-Kurdish communities to contain their lands and to annex it to the Kurdish region.

References:

1. Phebe Marr, "The Modern History of Iraq", P. 9
"In recent history, Kurds have been migrating from the mountains into foothills and plains, many settling in and around Mosul in the north and in the cities and towns along the Diyala River in the south, but most Kurds still live along the lower mountain slopes where they practice agriculture and raise livestock"
2. Edger O'balance, "The Kurdish Revolt", P. 33
"Right up until the end of the 19th century the sight of a large tribal federation, with all its livestock, moving across the mountains and plains of the northern parts of the Middle East in search of fresh grazing, was both splendid and ominous - as nomadic Kurds moved like a plague of locusts, feeding and feuding"
3. David McDowall, "A Modern History of the Kurds", I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd Publishers 1996, London & New York, P. 144.
"The towns and villages along the high road running from Mosul to Baghdad were mainly Turkish speaking, being Turkmen",
"But, as the commission noted, the Kurd 'is taking possession of the arable and in "Kurdizing" certain towns' specially the Turkmen's ones of the high road"
4. William R. Hay, "Two Years in Kurdistan 1918 - 1920", (William Clowes and Sons, Limited, London and Beccles 1921), P. 81 - 83
"Dizai tribe descended from the hills about 3 centuries ago, and occupied a few villages round Qush Tappah. In the middle half of the 19th century they started to expand, and rapidly covered the whole country up to Tigris. In the late 1920s, they constitute one third of the Erbil district population." "It is reported that less than a century ago trees and shrubs were plentiful on the slopes of Qara Choq Dag; when the Kurds came, however, they were quickly taken for fire woods and no trace of them now remains"
5. Ibid, P. 10
"Mandali in fact was an ideal training ground. Four languages were current in the district, and most of the townsmen could speak all four. As children they learnt their mother tongue, Turkish, from their parents, and the local Kurdo-Lurish dialect from their nurses and the people of the hills, whither they were sent for the hot weather. Subsequently they acquired Arabic from the men who tended their date-gardens, and Persian from the merchants who visited their town and became guests in their houses".
6. George Keppel, "Personal Narrative of Travels in Babylonia, Assyria, Media, and Scythia", H. Colburn 1827, Vol. I, P. 30
"Not many weeks before we saw this Moolah, he was one of the principal persons of Mendali, a Turkish town near the frontier. In those days he was the bosom friend of Davoud Pasha, "his best of cut-throats" and most willing instrument of assassination"
7. Ibid. P. 267

"From the ferry we rode about 2 miles along the banks of the river, arrived at Bacoubah, our second day's march. This appears to have been a very considerable place, but has been laid almost entirely in ruins by the army of Coords, under the command of Mohammad Ali Meerze".

8. Ibid., P. 276 - 281

"We reached Shahraban at eleven o'clock P.M., and found it almost entirely deserted. ---. We wondered through the desolate street, some time without finding any house with inhabitants, till we came to a caravanserai, where we met a man who told us that all the inhabitants had left the place, which had been sacked and ruined by the Coords." "This town was, not many months back, one of the most populous and thriving in the pashalick of Baghdad, now the whole population consisted of about 3 families"

9. Ibid., P. 290 - 291

"Our tents were pitched to the north of the town. Kizil Rubaut, in common with its neighbors from the vindictive spirits of its Coordish enemies"

10. Ibid., P. 293

"In an hour and a half we found ourselves at Baradan, which, in common with other villages, has suffered from the inroads of the Coordish army"

11. Ibid., P. 297

"Khanaki, which is of reputed antiquity, defines the frontier of the Pashalick of Bagdad, and has met with a fate natural to its unfortunate position between two rival powers. About two years ago, it was taken by Mohummud "Ali Meerza, and must at that time have had its share of the calamities of war"