

## **Assassination of Turkmen Neurosurgeon: Iraqi Turkmen are, in fact, exposed to genocide**

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Being a non-ruling community (minority) is considered to be one of the major reasons of exposure to violation of human rights. When such a community holds strategic and wealthy land in a politically unstable and culturally not-democratic nationalistic country, the sufferings will certainly augment. Given the insecurity of Iraq, it is highly likely that atrocities against communities could be expected. This is the case of the Iraqi non-Kurdish non-Arabic communities, of which the Turkmen is the largest.

The thirty five years of the Ba'ath party regime had exposed the Turkmen of Iraq to killings, arbitrary detentions, deportation, and confiscation of lands, change of the regional demography, forcing to change their ethnic identification to Arab, deprivation of work, political, cultural and property rights and denying them study in mother language.

After the occupation of Iraq, large Turkmen regions have been exposed to immense Kurdish settlement; almost all Turkmen regions are controlled and administered by the Kurdish security forces and Peshmerga militias. The Kurdish authorities claim all the Turkmen lands. Tens of thousands were displaced from Telafer and Kerkuk region. They are vaguely presented in the Iraqi constitution. They have been marginalized in the administration. Intimidations, killings, arbitrary detentions, assassinations and kidnappings have numerously increased.

Deputy of Kerkuk police chief general Turhan Abdul-Rahman stated in a press conference at 11 April 2011 that the province witnessed significant increase in threats and abduction targeting individuals from the Turkmen community. As a consequence, Turkmen people are forced to leave their homes, either to be rented or sold - and have moved to Erbil province or Turkey. He also added: "Obviously the intention is to empty the province from its original inhabitants".

Hundreds of Turkmen have been threatened or kidnapped in recent months: children, young people, businessmen, contractors and physicians. Another large number who paid large sums as 'protection money' have escaped the threats. According to some source, the Turkmen have paid since the occupation about \$50 million (USD) in ransoms to release kidnapped people.

*During the last week three Turkmen were assassinated, one of them a neurosurgeon with his teenage brother. Another Turkmen has been kidnapped, two others escaped assassination, one of them seriously injured in the attempt, and one of the guards of Turkmen president of Kerkuk province council attacked and seriously injured.*

It remains difficult to illustrate that how such a large community has been exposed to ethnic cleansing over the decades and ignored by the international community, despite its close involvement with Iraq. The possible causes for this neglect include:

- Ill-developed Turkmen civil society organizations and political parties and absence of general Turkmen political system;
- Absence of Turkmen strategic centers, media and lobbying groups to enlighten the international community on the Turkmen situation;
- Turkmen issues are not included in the interests of the international powers involved in Iraq;
- Blackout of the media by the Kurdish authorities which control and administer Turkmen region;

In view of the above stated facts, it becomes clear that the Turkmen of Iraq are suffering from genocide and ethnic cleansing; their security is absent, their economic situation deteriorates and they flee from their land.

The Kurdish political parties administer large Turkmen areas and most of the Kerkuk region by their security forces and Peshmerga militias, and share a major responsibility for ethnic cleansing against Turkmen.

Equal participation of all communities of the region in the administration and in the formation of police forces, security apparatus and Army could be one of the best measures to improve the security.

Turkmen authorities should establish a general Turkmen political structure and improve the media and research organizations to enlighten the national, regional and international communities about these ethnic cleansing against the Turkmen of Iraq.

The Iraqi government is directly accountable in this regard, while the US forces and United Nations have moral and legal responsibilities to take measures to stop these atrocities against the Turkmen of Iraq.

Turkmen policy of Turkey could neither help the Turkmen of Iraq to establish a powerful political system nor served to stop these atrocities. Iraqi Turkmen politicians and organizations should work to gain the logistic and political support of the other Turkic countries, for instance, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan

The international funding organizations which are accustomed to support almost without exception the Kurdish civil society and independent media in the region should stop this policy and extend support also to the Turkmen and other non-ruling communities.

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Chronological details of the events:

- 5 September: assassination of Neurosurgeon Yıldırım Abbas Demirci and his teenage brother
- 7 September: killing of Ismail Mohammed Ali, owner of Office of Real Estate
- 9 September: kidnapping attempt of Kemal Ekbar
- 10 September: kidnapping of Ekrem Şakır Şukur, health staff
- 11 September: gunshots of Abdul Emir, a guard of president of Kerkuk province council
- 13 September: kidnapping attempt of Hişam Behcet Hikmet, director of a gas company