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### The defeats of the Iraqi Turkmen continue as the Turkish state usurps their political will

It seems as if the Iraqi Turkmen political system has not suffered from stunting since 1990, and that it has not been absent from the Iraqi political scene since then, and that the Turkmen people are not suffering politically, economically, educationally, or administratively. [Aslan 2023] The results of the recent local elections shocked many Turkmen entities, but the results of previous elections, since 2003, did not differ from these elections. In addition, no change occurred in the Turkmen political arena to change the election results. (Table)

The strange phenomenon is that crying today is limited to Kirkuk only, as if the Turkmen do not exist anywhere other than Kirkuk, neither in Salah al-Din Governorate (Tuz and Amerli), nor in Mosul Governorate, nor in Diyala Governorate, where Turkmen are present in all its regions, nor in Erbil or Baghdad. [Nakip 2023]

Table, the Turkmen winners in the Iraqi provincial council elections of December 18, 2023.

Mosul Governorate	Electoral list	Kerkuk Governorate	Electoral list	Salah al-din Governorate	Electoral list
Lilyal Muhammad Atto	NAH	Ahmed Ramzy Karim	UIF	Atef al-Najjar	NF
Moaz Abbas al-Silo	NAH	Sawsan Abdel Wahed Jadoua	UIF		
Hassan Thabet Bashar	NP				
Sajida Muhammad Efendi	PA				
Hisham Muhammad Tutunchi	ND				

NAH= National al-Hadbaa NP= Nineveh to its people PA= Progress Alliance ND= National discount  
UIF= United Iraq Front NF= National framework

However, elections are a democratic phenomenon, where citizens choose who will manage them best and who will find solutions to their problems. Elections are held at the state level, where citizens elect members of parliament or city councils from their parties or from independents, and the largest assumes the reins of government to govern and manage the state in the best way.

But in today's Iraq, with the fragility of the state in all its aspects, its failure to provide the simplest services to the citizen, and the absence of social and even legal justice, the administrative, commercial, and economic system operates on the foundations of nationalist affiliation. Democratic administration and culture are absent, racism is prevalent, and the fierce conflict between the two major powers is on nationalist grounds and at the expense of Iraqi minorities, especially at the expense of the Turkmen. In light of this ordeal, the Turkmen of Iraq are spread over very large areas, as they have become a minority in most of their regions. (al-Hirmizi 2005)

In this difficult equation, the suffering of millions of Turkmen citizens is great and multifaceted, not to mention their exposure to the worst types of human rights violations during the decades of Baath regime rule. (Samanci 1999) Turkmen today:

- The Turkmen lack the most basic means of professional journalism and media in light of the absence of political and economic culture. As for the few large Turkmen media outlets, they are subject to the Turkish state and are absolutely managed by Turkish state departments and operate in accordance with the interests of the Turkish state, which often conflict with Turkmen interests,

- Turkmen education suffers from fundamental problems and many shortcomings, the most important of which is the lack of a Turkmen university from which tens of thousands of Turkmen school graduates can enrol, (SOITM Foundation 2009)
- Poverty, unemployment, and marginalization in appointment to state departments are widespread among the Turkmen,
- The economy in the Turkmen regions is under the dominance of Arabs or Kurds, which puts Turkmen businessmen and investors in all fields in a negative position,
- Despite the big magnitude of Turkmen literature, art and music, and despite the abundance of Turkmen writers, artists, painters and sculptors, the Turkmen today lack the simplest types of institutions that provide them with support, especially financial and logistical.

The Turkmen also lack civil society organizations, unions, educational institutions, and the printing house. Civil society organizations undertake major tasks in educating society in all areas of life, especially in communities that suffer from many problems, such as the Turkmen of Iraq.

The civil society organizations that exist today in the name of Turkmen are owned by the Turkish state and subject to its will. They are fake organizations whose activity is very limited and almost useless. Each institution is managed by two or three people and receive monthly wages ranging from 100-150 US dollars from the Turkish state.

The large printing house bearing the name of the Turkmen located in the Turkmen region is also owned by the Turkish state and is managed by Turkmen workers appointed by the Turkish state, who lack the most basic standards of fitness and qualifications, excluding qualified, well-known Turkmen intellectuals and academics. The printing house operates according to the policy of the Turkish state and the mentality and policy of the parties that rule Turkey, and today according to the policy and mentality of Erdogan.

There is no doubt that any society that is numbered in the millions, such as the Turkmen of Iraq, and suffers from problems that threaten its existence, needs a political system (Iraqi Turkmen Council) that is not only professional, but one with exceptional capabilities and a very large economy:

- It works so that the Turkmen have a number of seats in the Iraqi parliament and a presence in the Iraqi state in a size commensurate with their real size in Iraq.
- It works to ensure that the Turkmen play an influential role in the Iraqi political arena.
- It owns all specialized committees,
- It can find large sources of financing,
- It finances Turkmen political parties,
- It encourages, finances, and works on the emergence of professional civil society organisations,
- It provides health services and professional needs (agricultural and industrial) in the Turkmen regions,
- It works to find work for unemployed Turkmen,
- It realizes the appointment of the Turkmen as a legitimate right to involve the Turkmen in the administration of their regions,
- It ensures the appointment of Turkmen in hundreds of sovereign positions which are allocated to Turkmen in the Iraqi state, such as ministers, general directors, and ambassadors,
- It addresses the significant negligence in municipal services in their areas,
- It works to ensure the provision of funds that ministries must allocate in the Turkmen regions,
- It is a reference for the Turkmen when the state makes decisions that concern the entire Turkmen community, for example:
  - Turkmen language radio and television,
  - General directorates such as education in the Turkmen language and the Turkmen Affairs Committee.
- It works to return tens of thousands of dunams of Turkmen land expropriated by the previous regime,
- It works
  - to document the demographic changes which had been made in the Turkmen regions since decades,

- to inform the international community about these demographic changes and about other violations of the human rights of Turkmen,
- to stop Arabization and Kurdification of Turkmen regions,
- It establishes a large central library that contains sources related to the Turkmen. Because many Iraqis and the Arab and Western world lack the most basic information regarding the Turkmen of Iraq. In addition, an important part of the Turkmen community, especially the new generation, do not have historical and geographical information about the Turkmen of Iraq and are ignorant of the decades of human rights violations to which the Turkmen of Iraq are exposed,
- It works at national, regional, and international levels to lobby and gain support for the plight of Turkmen.

The reasons mentioned for the inevitability of a Turkmen political system are due to the exceptional situation experienced by the Turkmen of Iraq. However, any society that has its own national characteristics needs a general political and administrative system in order to preserve those characteristics. In this way, any political party gains the trust of its community to support it electorally.

So where is the Turkmen political system in this difficult equation?

The Turkmen political system was established in Turkey in 1990 and remained under the control of the Turkish authorities (intelligence and foreign affairs), who subordinated it to Turkish national interests. To establish the Turkmen Front in 1994 by the Turkish state to ensure absolute control over Turkmen politics, the nucleus of the Iraqi Turkmen Council was formed under the title of the Turkmen Shura Council, which later evolved into the Iraqi Turkmen Council in 2005. Six years later, in May 2011, the Iraqi Turkmen Council was dissolved by the Turkish embassy in Baghdad. Since then, Turkey has thwarted all attempts by Turkmen politicians and intellectuals to establish an independent Iraqi Turkmen council and has remained determined not to allow the Turkmen of Iraq to establish the Turkmen council.

The Turkmen Front and the Turkmen political system in general suffered from exploitation, tyranny, sanctions and humiliation under the control of the Turkish administration until it reached complete collapse in 1996. It was restructured by the Turkish military in 1997, and the Turkish army managed it with an iron fist. The Turkish administration eliminated every Turkmen politician or Turkmen party that did not agree with the policy and interest of the Turkish state.

The dwarfing of the Turkmen political system came at the hands of Erdogan in May 2011, when the Turkmen Council was dissolved, and the head and members of the Executive Committee of the Turkmen Front were changed without organizing the Turkmen General Congress. Instead of the Turkmen Council, a fictitious six-member body called the "Diwan of the Turkmen Council" was formed, which had no goals or procedures. Erdogan was also able for the first time to include a small number of members of the Muslim Brotherhood in the executive committee of the Turkmen Front, and he also made radical changes in the Turkmen media and the Turkmen satellite channel to bring them completely under his policy control.

The silencing of the Turkmen political system by Erdogan came after the failed coup in July 2016, where Erdogan took control of the Turkish state and personally took over the file of managing the Turkmen and the entire Turkmen political system. Over time, Erdogan replaced all the cadres of the Turkmen Front with individuals more submissive to him and his Islamist and extremist policies. Without caring about whether the new cadres are welcomed by the Turkmen people or not or have a good reputation or not. On May 28, 2021, Erdogan replaced the head of the Turkmen Front with a Turkmen politician from the Muslim Brotherhood.

The changes that Erdogan was and is still making in the Turkmen political system contradict the simplest administrative rules and contradict the simplest articles of the Turkmen Front Charter. Rather, it is consistent with his mentality, his vulgar political desires, and his extremist religious beliefs. Thanks to this, the Turkmen political system today is nothing more than ink on paper.

The biggest blow that the Turkish state dealt to the Turkmen of Iraq and to their policy is that it subjected and continues to subject the Turkmen political system to Turkish funding only and deprived the Turkmen of any other funding, even funding from kinship countries and millions of dollars per month from the oil-for-food program. Knowing that Turkish funding was and still is trivial compared to the needs of millions of Turkmen who suffer from major problems. Thus, Turkey leaves Iraqi Turkmen helpless in the face of the challenges that threaten their existence. (Jerjis 2020)

In the context of the above-mentioned narrative, this huge number of problems and suffering experienced by millions of Turkmen spread over large areas in Iraq can only be known and resolved through an independent and professional national system. Such a system could certainly diagnose these problems and sufferings better than Turkey and provide better solutions to them as well. Turkey cannot know or react to so many problems, needs and suffering of millions of people, and even if it knew, it is impossible and illegal for Turkey to take all these measures and projects to solve them. There is a high probability that Turkey does not want to address so many problems.

So, the conclusion is that there is no escape for the Turkmen of Iraq to liberate their political will from the grip of the Turkish state and establish an independent public political system of their own.

This system includes the Turkmen Council (the supreme political authority), which is made up of political parties and independents, and has its own specialized committees, strategic centres, required buildings, and workers in these institutions who must devote themselves to the system. They are allocated appropriate salaries commensurate with the large and different tasks and burdens placed on them.

The Turkmen parties, which suffer from the absence of the most basic components of the political institution, in turn need large funds to rebuild themselves in order to provide what is required of them in the complex Iraqi political arena. The same situation applies to Turkmen civil society institutions.

Then, the Turkmen political system and the Turkmen parties can bring the Turkmen voter to the ballot boxes and win results that suit the size of Iraq's population. Otherwise, Iraqi Turkmen will continue to suffer immeasurably, and their existence will remain threatened.

Historical geopolitical factors make the independent Turkmen political system obtain all kinds of support, especially political and financial, from national, regional, and international powers, especially from sister societies and countries. In the case that Turkish control over the Turkmen political will continues and its exploitation in the context of the Turkish national interest, it is natural that all these forces will continue their hostility to the Turkmen of Iraq, and thus the disappointment of the Turkmen people will continue, not only in the field of elections, but in every fields.

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