



Unrepresented
Nations and Peoples
Organization



Iraqi Turkmen Human Rights
Research Foundation

Conference Concept Note

Name of Conference: "Iraqi Turkmen: The Human Rights Situation and Crisis in Kerkuk"

Organizers: Organised by the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organisation (UNPO) and Iraqi Turkmen Human Rights Research Foundation (SOITM), in partnership with the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) and the Nonviolent Radical Party.

Location: European Parliament, Brussels, (ASP 5G1)

Date: 26 – 27 March 2007, 01:00pm – 04:30pm

Topics: The last reliable census data from Iraq, gathered in 1957, identifies the Turkmen as the third largest ethnic group in Iraq. Their population has long historical roots in northern Iraq, stretching back beyond the Islamic period, and rising to prominence as administrators, merchants, and politicians under the Ottoman Empire, particularly in urban areas such as Kerkuk, Erbil, Telafer, Kut, and districts of Salahaddin, Diyala and Mosul, where they lived as a majority.

Turkmen influence in northern Iraq began however its decline shortly after Iraq's independence in 1932, when predominantly Kurdish populations began entering Iraq's northern cities in large numbers from surrounding areas following the growth of the burgeoning oil industry. This rapid demographic change quickly produced ethnic tension and violence, exasperated further upon the establishment of Ba'ath Party rule in 1968, a period during which the position of all minorities in Iraq became increasingly precarious.

Saddam Hussein's regime instigated a campaign of intensive "Arabisation" in rebellious regions of northern Iraq, systematically expelling Turkmen, Kurdish, and Assyrian minorities, encouraging the resettlement of Arabs, and redrawing political boundaries. Violence, killings, and political and economic discrimination effectively destroyed Turkmen civil society, most of which was forced to register as Arab in order to engage in commerce or employment of any kind.

The relative peace that fell over northern Iraq following the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime in 2003 set it apart from regions elsewhere which still suffer the scourge of sectarian violence. Little has however been done to resolve the region's long history of ethnic tension, with recent developments suggesting a concerted effort must be made to secure long term stability in a region burdened with a violent past.

The Transitional Administrative Law of Iraq set the scene for "normalising" the region following the demographic manipulations of the Ba'ath era, with a primary focus on returning the thousands who were forcefully expelled. The current perception is however that this process has been dominated by Kurdish political actors who were well equipped to organise following the 2003 invasion. Backed by US officials, their influence over the 2005 constitutional process also secured the inclusion of Article 140, which resolves to determine the status of Kerkuk through "the will of its citizens" by a date no later than 31 December 2007.

As this deadline approaches, such an attempt to rush the resolution of Kerkuk's status has come to appear increasingly irresponsible. The city is rich in both oil and history, and as such has become the subject of intense political disagreement. Turkmen communities in particular stand opposed to the inclusion of their historical city in a Kurdish region, and fear Kurdish dominance of administrative posts ahead of the scheduled referendum has resulted in

Kurdish voter registration and immigration well in excess of displacement during the Ba'ath period. The process of normalisation is thus clearly far from complete and remains fraught with complexities, as no consensus has emerged on what would constitute "normality." This reality threatens to significantly undermine the legitimacy of any results attained before these difficulties are resolved through an open and inclusive dialogue which includes also Turkmen and Arab communities, as well as other minorities in the region.

This conference therefore aims to convene representatives of Iraq's new institutions with outside policy makers with an interest and opportunity to influence the reconstruction of the Iraqi state. The history and concerns of the Iraqi Turkmen will be presented by some of its most prominent figures in an effort to ensure that the next crucial steps in the reconstruction process proceed in a manner consistent with the principles of democracy, human rights, and the genuine inclusion of all affected minorities in the region. These are principles without which a stable Iraq will inevitably remain illusive.

Invited Contributors:

Aydin Aksu, *Baghdad Representative of the Iraqi Turkmen Front*

Ibrahim Arafat, *Deputy of the Mosul Governorate*

Muzaffer Arslan, *Advisor to the President of Iraq on Turkmen Affairs*

Enver Bayraktar, *Member of the Kerkuk City Council*

Marino Busdachin, *UNPO General Secretary*

Turhan Comez, *Member of Kerkuk Commission at the Parliament of Turkey*

Sadettin Ergec, *Head of the Iraqi Turkmen Front and Member of the Iraqi Parliament (tbc)*

Joost Hiltermann, *International Crisis Group - Middle East Representative (tbc)*

Ersed Hurmuzlu, *Author*

Usame Nadzim Ibrahim, *Diyala Province Representative of the Iraqi Turkmen Front*

Jasim Mohammed Jafar, *Iraqi Minister of Youth and Sports*

Sheth Jerjis, *Chairman of the SOITM*

Muhammed Khalil, *Member of the Kerkuk City Council (tbc)*

Yasar Mahmut, *Mosul Representative of the Iraqi Turkmen Front*

Ali Mehdi, *Head of the Turkmen Group of the Kerkuk City Council*

Ali Hasim Muhtaroglu, *Tuz Khurmatu Representative of the Iraqi Turkmen Front*

Jale Neftchy, *Member of the Kerkuk City Council (tbc)*

Suphi Saatci, *Editor, Qardashliq Journal*

Rakan Said, *Member of the Kerkuk City Council*

Hasan Turan, *Member of the Kerkuk City Council*

Kenan Uzeyiragali, *Head of Independents Party and Member of Turkmen Council (tbc)*

Participation: For further information, or enquiries concerning attendance, please contact Michael Gibb at the UNPO Secretariat: E-mail: IT@unpo.org Tel: (+31) (0)70 3646504