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WORKING GROUP ON MINORITIES
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Title: Issues Concerning the Turkmen of Iraq

The Turkmen are the third largest ethnic group in Iraq after the Kurds and Arabs. The number of the Turkmen is estimated at 3 million or 13% of the Iraqi population. Despite their population, they do not even have basic minority rights.

None of the censuses performed in Iraq had neutral International observers. Therefore, census results could not be independently verified. Methods used in censuses, even after the occupation, were unscientific and they were designed to serve state policy.

The Kurdish militias (Pashmargas) are a threat against the unity of Iraq and freedom of expression. The Kurdish authorities with Pashmargas have manipulated the election ballots, prevented large sections of Turkmen from voting and switched boxes during the January 30 elections.

The misconception of Turkish intervention in Iraq had dire effects on the Turkmen; they have been excluded from political equations and pushed into isolation.

Under the 1925 Constitution, the Kurds and the Turkmen had the right to use their own languages in schools, government offices and to have their own language press. In 1932, entering the League of Nations, the Iraqi government declared that it would respect all minority rights. But in 1933, it began closing Turkmen schools and sent activists into exile. On 24 January 1970, the Baathist government granted cultural rights to the Turkmen. This was short-lived. At the congress of the Ba'ath Party in 1971, it was decided to intensify Arabification of the Turkmen area. In 1972, the right to instruction in Turkmen was infringed upon.

In 1973, in the Interim Constitution no reference was made to the Turkmen population in Iraq. In 1990, the new Constitution states that "Iraqi people consist of Arabs and Kurds only." The ignoring of the Turkmen still continues in the Iraqi Administrative Law of 2004. Therefore, it is essential for Turkmen to acquire equal rights with other ethnic groups in the Permanent Constitution.

DEMANDS

- Since the Arabs and the Kurds ignore the fact that the Turkmen are the largest ethnic group in Iraq, it is necessary to make a census entirely under the observation of international community. A well known neutral international organization or a consortium of international organizations should be chosen to prepare a scientific method to perform the first fair census in Iraq. So that the facts be established.
- The Turkmen demand to be a part of the whole Iraq, not to be a part of any federal government. But if the federal system is accepted by the entire Iraqi nation, then the Turkmen should be given the right to govern their own federal region where they constitute a majority.
- Regarding the unity of Iraq, the sole official language should be Arabic. However, in the Temporary Administrative Law, the Kurdish language is admitted as the official language with Arabic. Therefore, since the Turkmen represent a large ethnic group, they demand that the Turkish language be accepted as an official language along with Arabic and Kurdish.
If these two previous demands are not met, then the Turkmen should demand for the Turkish language to be an official language together with Arabic where they constitute a majority.
- The Turkmen suffered from various degrees of suppression and assimilation that ranged from political persecution and exile to terror, massacres and ethnic cleansing. Therefore, the Turkmen demand compensation for their material and psychological losses.
- The Turkmen declare that the Constitutional preparation process is a significant step in the formation of the new Iraqi state. Therefore, every ethnic group should be represented in the Constitution Commission in accordance with their population ratio to the Iraqi population.
- The Kurdish militias should be disarmed and the Kurdish administration prevented from interfering in all stages of census and election processes. In Turkmen region, security should be switched and provided by neutral police force from central or Southern Iraq.