

The Nederland  
---. ---. --, ----- Nijmegen  
Tel: 0031 (0) -----  
Email: soitm@chello.nl

**WORKING GROUP ON MINORITIES**  
**11th session**  
**(30 May to 3 June 2005, Geneva, Switzerland)**

**Title: The Turkmen of Iraq: Underestimated, Marginalized and exposed  
to assimilation**

**Terminology**

The term Turkmen, which first appeared in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, is used to describe the people of Turkmenistan and all the Turkic people in the west and southern west countries of the Caspian Sea: Turkey, Azerbaijan Republic, Azerbaijan of Iran, Arabic countries (Iraq, Syria and others) and the Balkan countries.<sup>1</sup>

**History**

Turkic people were already in Iraq under the Sasanians.<sup>2</sup> In the early Islamic era, the Turks arrival in Iraq started with the settlement of about 4000 Bukharan Turks under the Umayyad governor of Basra Ubeydullah Ibn Ziyad in 673 – 674.<sup>3</sup> For most of the time when the Abbasids ruled from Baghdad (744 - 1258) the Turkish soldiers were figureheads of the army under Turkish commanders.<sup>4</sup> In the Samanid (819 - 999) army the Turkish militia was an important element. In the Buyid (932-1062) army, the Turkmen element was the main military force.<sup>5</sup> With the Seljuks the Turkmen became the real sovereigns in Iraq. The Turkmen, who were the second largest nationality in Iraq under the Buyids, had further increased in number during the Seljuk period.<sup>6</sup> During the Atabeg era, a large gathering of Turkmen took place in Iraq.<sup>7</sup> Other waves of Turkmen entered Iraq in the winter of 1231, when the Mongols defeated the Khawarazm Shah Jalal al-Din, they spread in al-Jazeera cities: Sinjar, Khabur and Harran. The arrival of the Turkmen in Iraq reached its climax under the Mongols. Turkmen continued to arrive in Iraq at the time of the Qara Qoyunlu, the Aq Qoyunlu and the Ottomans. While the Shabaks (Qizilbash or Alawi) were the Turkmen soldiers of Shah Ismail who came to Iraq under the Safawis.<sup>8</sup>

**Demography**

The Turkmen of Iraq live mainly in a region, which stretches from Talafar in the Northwest to Badra and al-Aziziyya in the al-Kut province in mid eastern Iraq. They are found in the following provinces: Kerkuk,<sup>9</sup> Mosul, Erbil, Salah al-Din, Diyala, Kut and Baghdad. The largest Turkmen population concentration is found in the city of Kerkuk whose linguistics, cultural and ethnic identity is distinctly colored by their presence.<sup>10</sup>

Tavuk, Taza Khurmatu sub-districts and tens of villages in the Kerkuk province are Turkmen. The number of Turkmen in Erbil city is estimated to be no less than

250.000. Altun Kopri which was detached from Kerkuk in 1976 and annexed to Erbil is a large Turkmen sub-district. The Turkmen of Mosul are living in the large Talafar district (Population is 227,000), sub-districts of Iyadhiyya (11.000) plus 10 villages and Muhallabiyya (8.500) plus 7 villages, the large villages of Qara Qoyunlu (11.000), Rashidiyya (25.000), Shirikhan, Sallamiyya and in the Sinjar (about 20.000) city. There are a large number of Turkmen in Mosul city (about 30.000), the city's largest area 'Prophet Jonah' is a Turkmen neighborhood. Heavily inhabited Turkmen Bayat and Duz Khurmatu districts were annexed to Salah al-Din Province in 1976. Bestamli, Amirli and Sulayman Pak are from the large sub-districts of the latter province. The biggest and heavily Kurdified and Arabified Turkmen cities are found in Diyala province: Kifri District, which was detached from Kerkuk province in 1976, Kara Tepe, Kizil Rabat, Shahraban, Mandali and Khanakin.<sup>11,12,13</sup> The Turkmen speakers still constitute a considerable part of the population of Badra in al-Kut province. Those who forgot their mother language are still proud of their Turkmen origin as in al-Aziziyya. According to the Turkmen writers the Turkmen of Baghdad are estimated to be 50,000 families or 300.000 people.

### **Population size**

The Turkmen of Iraq are considered the third largest ethnic group in Iraq. Due to the undemocratic environment, their number has always been underestimated. It was fixed at 2% of the total Iraqi population during the negotiations of the Mosul issue in the establishment of the Iraqi State after the World War I.

According to McDowell<sup>14</sup> the Turkmen outnumbered other nationalities in Kerkuk province as a whole in the 1950s. The population of Kerkuk province was 388,939 of 6.250.000 of the total Iraqi population. The population of Arabs and Christians did not exceed 20-30 thousand in Kerkuk province.<sup>15</sup> There should have been at least 180,000 Turkmen in Kerkuk province alone making up 2.9% of the total Iraqi population, not taking into account other Turkmen living in Erbil, Mosul, Diyala etc.

Despite missing Turkmen voters in Mosul (not less than half million Turkmen population), Diyala and Baghdad the number of the Turkmen in the present Iraqi National Council is 15, this makes 5.5% of the total.

### **Political Situation (Tragedy)**

Since the establishment of the Iraqi State in 1921, the Turkmen are living between the other ethnic groups who had developed high nationalist feelings. The Arabs possessed the power of governing and the Kurds received helps and supports (financial, moral and even weapons) from the international community, while the Turkmen remained helpless. Their Human rights were violated by successive Iraqi governments. Turkmen officials were reduced in the government offices. Study in Turkmen language was terminated in 1932.<sup>16</sup> They were exposed to displacement and deportation, deprived from cultural rights, not permitted to register themselves as Turkmen in censuses and they were enforced to change their nationality. Meanwhile the neighboring countries and the international community were and are still unaware of/or indifferent to their lot.<sup>17</sup> Unfortunately the Turkmen tragedy, continued after the occupation of Iraq in 2003. Most probably because of the non-cooperative Turkish policy toward the occupation of Iraq, the occupation policy aims to marginalize the Turkmen of Iraq as it happened when the Governing Council and the Temporary Government were constituted. The heavily populated Turkmen district of Talafar has been neglected for about a century: the majority of houses are still built of adobes, the schools and roads have not been renovated for several decades, it has repeatedly been deprived of electricity or water for several months. They had to use the unhealthy water of the small river for washing and drinking. At

present piped water from the municipality is provided for only a few hours a week to the houses.

Despite extremely sporadic attacks or insult were directed toward the occupying power in the district of Talafar, sub-district Iyadhiyya and recently the large village Rashidiyya are heavily and repeatedly exposed to the attacks of the American tanks and helicopters and of the National Guards, which are constituted mainly of Kurdish Pashmargas.

### **Distortion of the Demography of the Turkmen regions**

**Arabification.** The Arabification policies of Kerkuk City began as early as in the 1930s, when the cabinet of Yasin Al-Hashimi made 2 racist decisions: Termination of study in Turkmen language in 1932<sup>16</sup> and the huge al-Hawije project to cultivate the vast plain at the west of Kerkuk City to settle the Arab tribes of Al-Ubeyd and Al-Jubur. With the establishment of the Republic, appointment of Turkmen dropped off and the Turkmen were discharged from the important positions in the governmental offices. In the dictatorial Ba'ath period, the assimilation and forced deportation of Turkmen from Kerkuk City started. The Turkmen were not allowed to buy immovable properties. After 1970s, Arabs have enjoyed special incentives and rights, which encouraged thousands of families to obey the order of the Ba'ath Party and settle in the historically Turkmen area Kerkuk. In the 1970s, the names of tens of villages and districts in Kerkuk province were officially given Arabic names. Large numbers of Turkmen families were given deportation notification from Kerkuk at the end of November 1993.<sup>18</sup>

**Kurdification.** Erbil city was almost completely Turkmen at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>12</sup> It is mainly Kurdified and now made the Capital of so-called Kurdistan. The main Turkmen city Kerkuk, which was almost completely populated by Turkmen, was exposed to the Kurdish emigration in the 1930s and 1940s.<sup>19, 20</sup> While the reason of Kurdification was economical and social at the beginning, with the set up of Kurdish uprising in the beginning of 1960, it took the form of political trend. McDowall describes the Kurdish policy toward Kerkuk city as follows:

"For both Arabs and Kurds the value of Kerkuk city had been greatly enhanced by the nationalization of the oil industry. At the beginning of 1974 oil revenue was expected to be ten times higher than in 1972. A huge resource was now at stake. Kerkuk accounted for 70 per cent of the state's total oil output and Mulla Mustafa felt bound to claim both the town itself and a proportion of its oil revenue"<sup>21</sup>

The most acute and heavy Kurdish movement into Kerkuk city started with the support of American authorities after the occupation of Iraq. Over a period of a few months about 200.000 Kurds entered Kerkuk. Today, the estimated number of the Kurds, which entered Kerkuk city after the fall of the previous regime is 350,000.<sup>22</sup> Thousands of the governmental buildings, were occupied by the Kurdish families and Kurdish Pashmargas. Several Shanty houses, which include hundreds of houses, started to be built around the city.<sup>23</sup>

### **Manipulation in the recent general election**

It can be concluded that the manual manipulations are among the largest drawbacks of the preceding Iraqi election, see the reports of the Iraqi Turkmen organizations reference.<sup>24</sup>

1. According to UNICEF and the US Department of state the population of Iraq was 25.175.000 in 2003 and 24.011.416 in 2002, consecutively. The Population annual growth rate was 2.82%. Then the Population number at the end of 2004 should be 25.884.935 and 25.375.302. According to UNICEF the percentage of

Iraqis above 18 years of age is **52.2%**. The total number of voters at the end of 2004 should be 13,511,936 and 13,245,908, consecutively. The voters outside Iraq were 283,460. While the number which the Independent Iraqi Election Commission determined is 14,596,551. The **surplus or not present** vote number is 0.75 – 1 million.<sup>25,26</sup> **To whom** were these votes counted?.

The leading feelings or ideologies of the Iraqi people today are ethnical and religious. **From whom** the Prime Minister Allawi got 11,689,943.

2. Duhok as almost purely Kurdish is one of the smallest provinces of Iraq. The population number of this province is 472,238. The number of voters is 378,990. **This makes 80.3% of the population above 18.** The percentage of turnout in Duhok was 92%, which is also impossible because there are hundreds of villages between the mountains. In this province the Kurdish alliance won 95%. This reminds that Saddam also won 97%!
3. According to the census 1987 the population number in the three Kurdish provinces of Duhok, Sulaymaniyya and Erbil was 1,977,982. The Population annual growth rate from 1990 to 2003 was 2.9%.<sup>23</sup> Then the **population** number in these three provinces should be 3,215,760 and the voters should be 1,678,626. The Kurdish regional government showed the number of **voters** to be about 2,030,411.
4. The real total number of Iraqi voters is accounted as 13,511,936. The real total number of Kurdish voters is 2,243,268. The percentage of the Kurdish voters is 16.6%. According to the most reliable references the Kurdish percentage in Iraq is around 17%. This means that **ALMOST ALL** the Iraqi Kurds **ALL OVER THE WORLD** have cast their votes!
5. Estimated number of Turkmen in Mosul is not less than 500,000. There cities were mentioned above. For all these Turkmen regions, for which should be instituted more than 30 boxes, there opened only 4 boxes in Talafar. To hamper the election processes, The American forces and the national guards started to bomb the citadel neighborhood of the city at the early morning. Showing the unsafe situation two of the four-election center was closed after a few hours. Despite being assigned previously, the voting boxes, ballots, the supervisors, and other election necessities did not arrive in the areas of both Turkmen sub-districts of Iyadiyyah and Muhallabiyya and the large village Sallamiyya, Kara Koyunlu and Rashidiyya with all the villages annexed.  
This happened also in the Christian regions of the plain of Nineveh: district of Al-Hamdaniyya, Karamlesh, Bartilla County, in Bashiqa, Bahzani, and the district of Al-Shaikhan. In the towns of Al-Qosh, Tel-Sqof, Batnaya, and Tel-Keif the voting ballots were not enough.
6. Before the election about 2 weeks and after the visit of the Deputy of US Department of State (Armitage) to the Kurdish leaders Barzani and Talabani and to the President and Iraqi Prime Minister in Baghdad, The Independent Election commission in Baghdad called the head (Ali Abbas) and (Nihad Abbas) one of the staffs of Independent Election sub-Commission in Kerkuk. In a meeting attended by the former Prime Minister of Talabani, Bahram Salah and from the Kurdish politicians Adil Murat and several other Kurds. The orders were given to the Kerkuk Independent election commission to register any Kurd in Kerkuk city (while the registration period was ended). They appointed 3 inspectors and 10 staffs in Kerkuk commission almost all were Kurds or pro-Kurds. All the information about the new registered Kurds were kept in the newly opened centers and not given to the Election commission of Kerkuk: forms and the lists of the names.

### **Building of New Iraq**

In a country like Iraq with multiple ethnicities, religions and ideologies the **Democratic System** will be the best to construct the new state. A **Decent Election** and a

Democratic Constitution are essential. **A**ccurate Population Registration Records, **I**ndependent Election Commission and **R**eliable Election Registration constitute the basic factors to achieve a decent election.

Whereas census and then the election are from the extreme necessities in Iraq, the obstacles are great and numerous: Insecurity, occupation troops, insufficient knowledge of Democracy by the Iraqis, huge psychological demands of the Iraqi to get their cultural rights, unreliable population registration data and insufficient experience of election procedures.

The Kurds and the occupation authorities played the leading role in all the processes of Election in the Northern provinces: preparing the election forms and boxes and distributing to the election centers, watching the voting processes, collecting and transportation of the boxes from election centers and guarding centers which continued for about a week.

Unfortunately, there were **NO** international election observers or any other independent observers in the Northern provinces.

**To achieve** reliable elections:

- The European council, the European countries, the United Nations and International Human Rights representatives should participate actively and directly in all stages of the Election, particularly in the Northern Provinces where the Kurds dominate the ruling system.
- Collecting and guarding of the boxes should never be given to the American army and national guards. 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 European council should have several representatives appointed in High Election Commission.
- The population registration data of the Northern provinces, which the Kurdish parties present, should be checked by the specialists for accuracy.
- The automated electronic system should be used in voting and accounting.

## References

1. Kerkuk City Website (KCWS), "The Turkmen", launched on SOITM website: <http://members.lycos.nl/Kerkuk/ITP.html>
2. Michael G. Morony, "Iraq after the Muslim Conquest", Priston University Press, New Jersey, 1984, P. 270 – 271.
3. Ibn al-Faqih, Buldan, P 191.
4. P. M. Holt, "The Cambridge history of Islam: The Further Islamic Lands, Islamic Society and Civilization", vol. 2, Cambridge University Press 1970, P. 828.
5. "Encyclopedia Britannica" 1992, vol 21, P. 982.
6. K. J. Al-Duri, Society and Economy of Iraq under the Seljuqs (1055 - 1160), P. 120 – 121.
7. Ibid., P. 122.
8. Matti Moosa, "Exreimst Shiites: The Gulat Sects", Syrancuse University Press, New York, 1988, P. 8.
9. References from 1 to 25 in the article entitled "Comments on the article entitled "The Kurdish Way" by Hicks, posted on November 6, 2004" launched on SOITM website: <http://members.lycos.nl/soitum/RumorP.pdf>



10. Edward Y. Odisho, City of Kerkuk: No historical authenticity without multiethnicity. Northeastern Illinois University, Chicago, IL U.S.A., P 5 – 6.
11. Willima Rupert Hay, "Two Years in Kurdistan 1918 – 1920", (William Clowes and Sons, Limited, London and Beccles 1921), p. 10.
12. Ibid., P. 81.
13. George Thomas Keppel, "Personal narrative of travels in Babylonia, Media and Scythia, in the year 1824, vol. 1, 3rd ed, London, P. 276, 281, 291.
14. McDowall "A Modern History of the Kurds", I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd Publishers 1996, London & New York, Page 329.
15. Hanna Batatu, "The old social classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq", (Princeton University Press, New Jersey 1978), p. 913.
16. Aziz Samanci, "Al-tarikh al-siyasi li Turkman al-Iraq", El-Saki Print House, First edition, Beirut 1999, P. 112.
17. SOITM report entitled "Violation of the Human Rights of the Iraqi Turkmen and Attempts to Assimilate Them During the Dictatorial Baath Period" launched on SOITM website: <http://members.lycos.nl/soitum/GR.pdf>
18. Max van der Stoel, Special Reporter of the Commission Human Rights, "Report on the Situation of Human Rights in Iraq" , E/CN.4/1994/58, p. 49.
19. Kerkuk City Website, "Kerkuk", launched on SOITM website: <http://members.lycos.nl/Kerkuk/>
20. Hanna Batatu, "The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq", p. 914.
21. David McDowall, "A Modern History of the Kurds", p. 305.
22. According to the Iraqi Ministry of Trade data, Kerkuk population is increased 280.000 during the first 6 months of occupation, while tens of thousands of Arabs settlers were runaway. This means that the people who entered Kerkuk city in the mentioned interval were much higher then 280.000. At the time being the increase of kerkuk population is expected to be about 400.000. Almost 90% of the new comers should be the Kurds.
23. SOITM report entitled "Two major biased points in the US-supported Iraqi Election" launched on SOITM website: <http://members.lycos.nl/soitum/CriminalsP.pdf>
24. The reports of the Iraqi Turkmen Organizations:
  - Iraqi Turkmen Front Press release on the Iraqi National Election <http://members.lycos.nl/soitum/ITF1.pdf>
  - Some of the notes that has been presented to the office of commissioner in Kerkuk, by Turkmeneli Party <http://members.lycos.nl/soitum/TEi1.pdf>
  - Unfair election process by Turkmeneli Party <http://members.lycos.nl/soitum/TEi2.pdf>
  - Irregularities in Iraqi Election by Turkmen Nationalist Movement <http://members.lycos.nl/soitum/TNM1.pdf>
25. UNICEF, At a glance: Iraq. ([http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/iraq\\_statistics.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/iraq_statistics.html))
26. US Department of state, Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs - August 2004, Background Note: Iraq (<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/6804.htm>)