



## Iraqi Turkmen Human Rights Research Foundation

"Underestimation of the Turkmen population size by Great Britain in the 1920s established a base for successive Iraqi governments and now for the Kurds to marginalize the Turkmen"

### Report

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Subject: **Influx of Kurds into Turkmen Regions, Particularly Kerkuk City**

The growth of nationalism in the absence of a democratic environment and lack of regional stability results in aggressive disputes. When it appears in an unhealthy cultural climate it can easily be transformed into racism which, in turn, can expose powerless ethnic groups to violation, discrimination and oppression. The group that holds the power will attack any other groups that he thinks threaten their national interests; the assimilation policies, usurpation of the lands and all the other types of violations of human rights occur.

Unfortunately, the Turkmen of Iraq and their main city Kerkuk<sup>1-10</sup> are victims of such multiple unhealthy trends.

It started with the British underestimation of their population size in order to gain the oil-rich Mosul province from Turkey,<sup>11</sup> during the foundation of the Iraqi state after the First World War. The lengthy negotiations (from 1918 until 1926) undoubtedly contributed to the continuous suppression and underestimation of the Turkmen reality.

The next assaults came from the chauvinistically minded successive Iraqi governments: firstly, 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 and secondly, the termination of teaching in Turkmen in the schools of Kerkuk and Kifri.<sup>12</sup> The assimilation of Turkmen, particularly in Kerkuk city, reached its peak during the implementation of the Baath's systematic Arabization policies:<sup>13</sup>

- Arabization policies, distortion of Turkmen concentration and dispersion of the Turkmen.
  - Resettlement of Arabs in the regions inhabited by Turkmen
  - Distortion of the Demography of the Turkmen settlement areas
  - Discrimination in employment opportunities, unfair dismissals and appointments
  - Deliberate measures to degrade living conditions of the Turkmen
  - Forced displacements and deportations of Turkmen
  - Interference with the right of ownership
- Extra judicial acts
  - Disrespect for the integrity of the person
  - Arbitrary arrests, detentions, exile, torture, cruel and inhuman punishments
  - Arbitrary executions
  - Disappearances

- Collective punishments
- Education, culture and the right to information
- Anti democratic policies that interfere with civil liberties
  - Political Rights
  - Sports rights
  - The right to food

With the support of Western forces, Kurdish nationalism became a reality after World War I and it intensified after World War II.<sup>14</sup> The Kurdish uprising and aggressive disputes with the Arabs aggravated nationalist ambitions in Iraq. Unfortunately, the Turkmen remained alone and without any support to face oppression by these two forces.

Immigration of the Kurds into Kerkuk city, who abandoned their rough way of living in the highlands and mountains to the flourishing agricultural and industrial Turkmen regions, had gradually increased in size and in danger for the Turkmen since the 1930s. McDowall writes that first Kurdish immigration in large numbers to the city took place during the 1930s and 1940s, that Kurds were driven from the land by landlord rapacity and drawn by the chance for employment in the burgeoning oil industry.<sup>2</sup> According to Batatu and McDowall, they had swollen to more than one third of the population, by 1959.<sup>1, 2</sup> which lead to the notorious Kerkuk massacre on 14th July 1959 during which Turkmen politicians and intellectuals were savagely killed by the Kurdish Militants and communists. Many of them were attached to vehicles and pulled through Kerkuk's main streets until they died. Others were hanged alive from electric cables along the city's streets.

After the toppling of the Baath regime, the US occupation forces rewarded the Peshmergas for their collaboration by allowing them to take over important governmental offices and the Kurdish parties gave financial support to the immigrating Kurds to build or purchase houses in order to settle in Kerkuk city. Kurdish parties began to dramatically change the demographic structure of Turkmen inhabited regions such as Kerkuk, Tuz Hurmatu, Khanaqin, Kizil Rabat and Shahraban, by bringing tens of thousands of Kurds from Duhuk and Sulaymaniyya provinces into these originally Turkmen cities, particularly into Kerkuk city. To claim the lands, Kurdish Peshmergas burned the Land Registry and Population Registry offices of Turkmen cities and particularly of Kerkuk city on two occasions: in 1991 and in 2003, destroying all the records.

The unfair and undemocratic appointment of Kurds in the three most important posts i.e.: Governor, Mayor and Head of the Police and Security Forces, in Kerkuk city and in most of the other Turkmen cities, has played an important role in allowing these immigrated Kurds to settle in these cities.

The list below shows the estimated numbers of immigrated Kurds and the areas where they settled in Kerkuk city after 9th April 2003, it is important to note however that these numbers were fixed before M. Barazani's latest campaign inciting the Kurds from outside Kerkuk to settle in the city and that consequently this list does not include the additional thousands of Kurdish families which immigrated into Kerkuk after Barazani's campaign.

1. In the Army Corps buildings: 30.000 Kurds
2. On both sides of Leylan Road and in the periphery of Taze Hurmatu: 30.000 Kurds.
3. In the Buildings of Idare al-Mahalliya: 5000 Kurds
4. The accommodation houses of both Petrol Company in Arafa and Kerkuk Airport: 5000 Kurds
5. In the hugely expanded regions of the Kurdish neighborhoods, Shorja, Iskan and Rahimava: 25.000 Kurds
6. In the Tisin and Baghdad Road and in the hundreds of governmental building which were occupied by the Kurdish families: 25.000 Kurds.

**Dr. Sheth JERJIS**

Chairman of SOITM  
Nijmegen, The Netherlands

**Dr. Ayoub BAZZAZ**

The deputy Chairman of Iraqi Turkmen  
Rights Advocating Committee (ITRAC) –  
London, UK

**Dr. Hassan AYDENLY**

President of CDITR  
Committee for the Defence of the  
Iraqi Turkmen Rights, Belgium

**Engineer Salman MOFAK**

Chairman of Turkmen National Action  
Front Ireland

**Merry FITZGERALD**

Human Rights Activist  
Committee for the Defence of the  
Iraqi Turkmen Rights, Belgium.

**Engineer Orhan KETENE**

Iraqi Turkmen Front U.S. Representative  
Washington D.C., USA

**References:**

1. Hanna Batatu, "The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq", Princeton University Press, New Jersey 1978, p. 913.

**Hanna Batatu** mentions: "Kerkuk, an oil center, lying 180 miles north of Baghdad, had been Turkish through and through in the not too distant past. By degrees, Kurds moved into the city from the surrounding villages. With the growth of the oil industry, their migration intensified. By 1959, they had swollen to more than one third of the population and the Turkmen had declined to just over half, the Assyrians and Arabs accounting, in the main, for the rest of the total of 120,000."

2. D. McDowall, "A Modern History of the Kurds", I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd Publishers 1996, London & New York, page 305.

**David McDowall** states: "Tension had been growing for some time between Turkmen, the originally predominant element, and Kurds who had settled during the 1930s and 1940s, driven from the land by landlord rapacity and drawn by the chance for employment in the burgeoning oil industry. By 1959 half the population of 150,000 was Turkmen; rather less than half were Kurds and the balance Arabs, Assyrians and Armenians."

3. D. McDowall, "A Modern History of the Kurds", page 335.

**In page 335:** "For both parties (Arabs and Kurds) its (Kerkuk city) value 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."

4. D. McDowall, "A Modern History of the Kurds", page 3.

**In page 3:** "Few Kurds would claim quite as much today, but would still claim the city of Kerkuk, even though it had a larger Turkmen population as recently as 1958."

5. C. J. Edmonds, "Kurds, Turks and Arabs", Oxford University press, London 1950, page 265.

**According C. J. Edmonds:** "The population at the time which I am writing numbered perhaps about 25,000, of whom the great majority was Turkmen and about one-quarter Kurds, with smaller colonies of Arab, Christians and Jews".

6. Marion Farouk, Iraq since 1958 – From Revolution to dictatorship, IB Tauris &co. Ltd, London 2001, p 70 – 72.

**M. Farouk affirms** the Turkmen nature of Kerkuk City: "The original population of Kerkuk city was Turkmen and the Kurds were more recent incomers. The Turkmen had always dominated the socio-economic and political life of the Kerkuk city".

7. Edward Y. Odisho, "City of Kerkuk: No historical authenticity without multiethnicity". Northeastern Illinois University, Chicago, IL U.S.A., P 5 – 6.

**E.Y. Odisho, mentions:** "The Turkmen as a large native community in Kerkuk city", "the largest Turkmen population concentration is in the city of Kerkuk whose linguistics, cultural and ethnic identity is distinctly colored by their presence".

8. Claudius James Rich, "Residence in Kurdistan", (Printed by Anton Hain KG, Meisenheim / Glan, West Germany; Republished in 1972 by Gregg International Limited West mead, Farnborough, Hants, England 1972), page 45 - 47.

**C. J. Rich portrayed** the country at the southern east and east of Kerkuk city as follows: "The village of Leylan like all the other villages on the Kurdish line, it is much harassed, and has been several times utterly ruined by the incursions of Kurds. The Kahya of the village entreated me to use my interest with Mahmud Pasha to get back 300 of his sheep, which had been carried off by the Kurds. The people of his and all the neighboring villages are of Turkmen race". "The Qara Hasan (north east to Leylan) is worth about 85,000 piaster annually, and extended in length about 6 hours. The late war, and the constant inroads of Kurds, have greatly depopulated this district, and proved very destructive to the agriculture".

9. J. S. Buckingham, "Travels in Mesopotamia", Gregg international Publishers limited 1827, page 338.

**Buckingham visited** Kerkuk in 1827 and determined the Kurdish country as 4 days away at the east of the city.

10. The position of mayor in Kerkuk city was acquired by election until the second half of the 1930s. Habib Talabani, who was the first Kurdish mayor of Kerkuk city, was appointed in the late 1930s centrally without election and for more than 10 years. The other two Kurdish mayors of Kerkuk city were Fazil Talabani, who remained in post for a few years until the coup of 1958 and Maruf al-Berzenci.

All the other Kerkuk city mayors were Turkmen.

The names of Kerkuk city mayors from the 1920s until 1980 are as follows:

**1920s:** Fattah Aga, Mecid Yakubi and Sadik Sarraf.

**1930s:** Abdurrahman Bakir and Baki Aga Gedik.

**1940s:** Habib Talabani.

**1950s:** Shamil Yakubi, Nureddin al-Waid, Fazil Talabani and Maruf Al-Berzenci.

**1960s and 1970s:** Hisameddin Salihi, Mazhar Tikriti, Nazim Salihi and Ibrahim Ahmet.

11. "Disregard of the Turkmen may distort the reality in the upcoming Iraqi census" ,  
The Report of SOITM, <http://members.lycos.nl/soitum/CensusP.pdf>
12. Aziz Samanci, "Al-tarikh al-siyasi li Turkman al-Iraq", El-Saki Print House, First  
edition, Beirut 1999, p. 87.
13. "The Summary of Violation of the human Rights of the Iraqi Turkmen and  
Attempts to assimilate them during the Dictatorial Baath Period", The Report of  
SOITM, <http://members.lycos.nl/soitum/GR.pdf>)
14. Lewis Bernard, "The multiple identities of the middle east", Weidenfeld and  
Nicolson 1998, p. 8.