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The views of Kerkuk’s Turkmen and Arabs” in the European  
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**Kerkuk**

Today, we are going to discuss the Kerkuk issue, which is considered as one of the major and long standing problems of Iraq. It is now about to worsen the already deteriorated condition of Iraq.

Kerkuk region is famous for its huge oil reserves,<sup>1</sup> natural gas and sulfur, the shallowest oil wells, the best oil qualities, and the vast fertile lands. In Kerkuk there are grounds which burn with scratch.

Kerkuk city is the city of the eternal fire burning day and night; it streams continually as if from a spring, illuminating the skies of Kerkuk for millennia. Kerkuk is also the city of Prophet Daniel.

Kerkuk is one of the richest cities in the world, it is constantly ignored. Kerkuk has an excellent river bed but without water, the infrastructure remained ill-developed as the municipality services have never been improved. The healthcare was by no means developed. It is a city with a very poor urbanization. Additionally, Kerkuk has been regularly exposed to the demographical changes and its original inhabitants suffered continuously.

Kerkuk problem is the main factor which displaced forcedly or willingly hundreds of thousands of Iraqis from the south to the north, the same factor exposed the original Kerkuk communities to the deportation and systematical assimilation. After the occupation another phase started which saw the great wave of the northerners being brought into Kerkuk and the Kerkuk communities' exposed to marginalization.

In all these events, the non democratic racist mentalities played a major role. Additionally, the unwise policies of the occupier amplified the extremism and further complicated Kerkuk problem. It is the time for us as the Iraqis to adopt the principles of democracy and work to spread the culture of human rights.

**Western Literature**

**And Kerkuk city**

Whereas the unopposed Ba'ath regime worked to own Kerkuk region before occupation, the Kurdish authorities who has already gained the compassion and the huge political support of the west started to control the city and claim the ownership of the region.

No doubt that the impressing of the Kurdish nature over the Kerkuk region in the western literature can be considered one of the significant factors which play today an important role in complicating the Kerkuk problem. A large numbers of western publications, even some academic sources, of the later half century had almost imposed the Kurdish nature over the Kerkuk region and even over the city of Kerkuk.

- Willium Safire, an author, columnist, and former USA presidential speechwriter considered Kerkuk the Kurd's ancestral home.<sup>2</sup>
- Paul McEnroe, an award-winning investigative reporter made Kerkuk city the Jerusalem of the Kurds and claimed that the city is populated mostly by the Kurds.<sup>3</sup>
- Luke Harding a Guardian correspondent considered Kerkuk a predominantly Kurdish city.<sup>4</sup>
- Maggy Zanger, teaches journalism and was the director of the Institute for War and Peace in Iraq said that Kerkuk city has been with Kurdish majority for hundreds of years.<sup>5</sup>
- Carole O'Leary is a Research Professor in the Center for Global Peace considered Kerkuk as historically Kurdish city and predominately Kurdish.<sup>6</sup>
- The Middle East specialist Robert Soeterik described Kerkuk as historical Kurdish region.<sup>7</sup>

In fact, Kerkuk city has never been with a Kurdish majority and no even a single expert source describes the city as the Kurdish city. Kerkuk city has always been described by the specialists on the north of Iraq with a Turkmen majority until 1970s.<sup>8-28</sup> Thereafter, the Arabification processes increased the Arabs and, later on, the Kurdification processes increased the number of the Kurds in the city.

I would present another two interesting cases which demonstrate how the realities of Kerkuk region are distorted in the western literature in favor of the Kurds:

In a long article entitled "Kurdish Ambition" for Mr. Lolke van der Heide, published in NRC newspaper at 25 January 2007. He says: "Kurdistan smells oil... The largest obstacle in the region is the position of Kerkuk. This original Kurdish city remained in the 1970s out of the Autonomous Kurdistan"<sup>29</sup>

I called him and asked him: how he knows that Kerkuk is a historical Kurdish city, and if there was an autonomous Kurdistan before 1970s? He simply said to me that he is not a specialist in the region.

In his study entitled "The Shabak and the Kakais: Dynamics of Ethnicity in Iraqi Kurdistan" Dr. Leezenberg commits a serious mistake in favor of the Kurds. He says:<sup>30</sup> "In the 1970s, Turkmen nationalists wanted to present the Kakais as a Turkmen subgroup: thus, the Kakai poet Hijri Dede, who had written works in Persian, Kurdish and Gorani (but not in Turkish) was made a member of the Turkmen Writer's Union in Baghdad".

Please note, he says, in 1970s Dede was appointed by Turkmen, while Dede died on 11 December 1952. He also says that Dede did not write in Turkish, Dede wrote mainly in Turkmen and has only a few poems in Kurdish.<sup>31</sup>

By hundreds of such publications, the western community had been taught a large number of misleading information about the region's history, geography and even about the Kurdish sufferings. The several hundreds Halapja victims made several thousands and the number of the victims of Anfal atrocity operations of 1988 increased more than 10 folds in the western literature.

### **And Kerkuk province**

Relating to the population nature of Kerkuk province as a whole, until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there is almost no a source which describes Kerkuk province of 1976 as a Kurdish inhabited region other than the district of Chamchamal. Despite that the Kurdish movement toward the west into Iraq continued along the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Kerkuk region remained with the Turkmen majority. This can be easily learned from the narratives of tens of the western travelers passed through the Kerkuk region.<sup>32-79</sup>

Unfortunately the early history of the modern Iraq was written by the political officers of the English mandates: Longrigg, Edmonds, Lyon, Hay, Soane and others. They were all politically minded and most of them were well known supporters of the Kurdish interests.

Professor Fieldhouse, from Jesus college of Cambridge describes the English political officer Lyon as a devoted supporter of the interests of the Kurds.<sup>80</sup> Lyon himself considers Edmonds as a supporter of the Kurdish interests.<sup>81</sup>

The Kurdish issues were disproportionally and intensively treated in the works of these authors imposing directly or indirectly the Kurdish nature on the north of Iraq and on Kerkuk region. This had been synchronized by the marginalization of Turkmen in Iraq due to the different geopolitical factors, of which the main was the Mosul problem.

With the intensification of the Kurdish settlement in Kerkuk region along the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Kerkuk province started to be described as with a Kurdish majority mainly by Edmonds. He can be considered the first author who greatly exaggerated the size of the Kurdish population in the province of Kerkuk as a whole.

In his estimation of the Kurdish population size in Kerkuk province in 1947, Edmonds unusually increases the percentages of the Kurds to 53%.<sup>82</sup> Edmonds wrongly considers the language of many Bayat regions Arabic and regards the Amirli regions as a Kurdified region.<sup>83</sup> Figures of the Iraqi census of 1957 falsify Edmonds and put the percentage of the Kurds in Kerkuk province to 48%. If we consider the continuous Kurdish immigration into Kerkuk between 1947 and 1957, then the figure of Edmonds should be further decreased. Unfortunately, the majority of the writers in Kurdish issues repeats the figures of Edmonds and considers Kerkuk with such high Kurdish majority, as an example David McDowall in his very well known and widely distributed book “A Modern History of the Kurds” describes Kerkuk with 53% Kurds.<sup>84</sup>

Furthermore, in the census of 1957; the total population number of the Turkmen in Iraq was put into only 136.200, which makes 2% of the general population. Certainly, there are no experts in the history of Iraq who agree today with this percentage of Turkmen population size.

Moreover, in contrary to the statistics of the census of 1957, the experts on the Iraq, McDowall and Batatu, considered the Turkmen population size in Kerkuk city just above half. As a result the error in the figures of the census of 1957 is about 13%.

Additionally, the figures of the Total population number of the Iraqi Turkmen were corrected to 567,000 in the statistics of the year 1958. This puts the percentage of the Iraqi Turkmen to 9%. This information was approved by the report number 735 of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, which states:<sup>85, 86</sup>

“No reliable contemporary data are available on the size of Turkmen population. The 1957 Iraqi census – the last in which the Turkmen were permitted to register – counted 567,000 Turkmen (9% of the population) among Iraq’s population of 6,300,000. The census also counted 819,000 Kurds (13% of the population).

This means that the Turkmen population size was about 5 folds underestimated. Despite this miscalculation, the Turkmen were the majority in Kerkuk according to the census of 1957. (Table 1)

As a result:

- The statistics of the census of 1957 related to Kerkuk province should be considered unreliable, which should not be used for the determination of the fate of such an important city with different ethnic communities.
- And the widely spread data that the Kurds are the majority in Kerkuk province as a whole should also be questioned.

Table 1, Statistics of General Census of 1957 for Kirkuk Governorate

Ethnicity	City of Kirkuk	% in City	Pop. The Province	% in the Province
Arabic	27,127	22.5%	109,620	28.2%
Kurdish	40,047	33%	187,593	48.2%
Turkish	45,306	37,7%	83,371	21.4%
Christians	1,509	1,2%	1,605%	0.4%
Jewish	101	0,1	123%	0.03%
Others	5,317	4,4%	8,228	2,1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>120,402</b>		<b>388,829</b>	

## Elections

I would begin my comments on the latter Iraqi general elections by a paragraph from the report of the commission of the League of Nations. This commission was sent to determine the ownership of Ottoman’s Mosul province in 1924. The paragraph is:<sup>87</sup>

“The elections which were to have taken place in Iraq at the beginning of this year (1924) could not be held because the number of voters inscribed in the registers gave Iraq 10 millions instead of about 3 millions. This was due to the fact that the chiefs had given exaggerated figures for their tribes in order to increase their political influence”

At that time Iraq was also occupied, but:

- The extremism was not tremendously erupted as it is today.
- The Iraqi politics were not divided in to several powerful groups with different contradicting interests.
- The Kurdish political system was not powerful as it is today, which claims today huge Iraqi lands with millions of ethnically mixed population.

In this situation, any election in Iraq will be exposed to huge manipulations, the large numbers of irregularities will be unavoidable and the size of the errors in the elections results certainly renders the outcomes illegal. All these took place in the two general Iraqi elections which were organized after the occupation.

Furthermore, the later Iraqi general election was administered mainly by the Kurdified administration supported Peshmerga militia in the majority of the disputed regions, which the Kurdish authorities frequently threaten to hold forcibly.

Tens of hundreds of complaints about the irregularities and manipulations were refused by the Independent High Electoral Commission of Iraq. In a conversation between the director of the operations office in the Iraqi High Electoral commission Mr. Adil al-Lami and Turkmen members in Kerkuk city council, Mr. Adil al-Lami said that an error of 60% is acceptable for the Independent High Electoral Commission of Iraq. Surely, the manipulations were much more than 60%.

### Administration

As a result, the Kurdish parties won crushingly in the immense regions with a mixed population in the disputed areas. They dominated the city councils and / or the administration. (Table 2)The Kurdification and the marginalization of the other communities were started. Hundreds of Kurdish families brought into the disputed regions. The Arabic and Turkmen names in the cities were changed to the Kurdish names. The signboards changed into Kurdish. The unemployment increased in between the non-Kurdish communities.

Here are some examples:

Table 2, Estimation of the Ethnic allocation of the city council members in the cities of disputed areas

Name		Estimated % of the Kurds	Population in 2005	Council of the cities		
				No. of members	No. of the Kurds	% of Kurds
Khanqin	<i>Center</i>	70 <sup>a</sup>	66,700	20	16	80
	<i>Jalawlaa</i>	20	60,425	20	8	40
	<i>Kiz Rabat</i>	20	41,115	17	8	47
Baladruz	<i>center</i>	30	88,225	20		
	<i>Mendeli</i>	25	23,713	20	10	50
	<i>Qazzaniya</i>	VS	15,042	20	2	10
Kifri	<i>Center</i>	75	50,000	10	10	100
	<i>Kara Tepe</i>	10	33,653	20	8	40
Tuz Khurmatu		30	±150,000	21	7	33
Erbil Gov.		80	±1.000,000	41	38	±90%
Kerkuk		<50 <sup>b</sup>	663,379 <sup>c</sup>	41	26	63
Mosul		25	±1.500.000	41	31	76

<sup>a</sup> = Thousands of the Arabs were forcedly deported after occupation. <sup>b</sup> = after huge Kurdification processes after occupation <sup>c</sup> = according to the Ration Cards in 2006, VS = Very small

### Khanaqin

- Khanaqin central district, which was almost equally mixed city from Turkmen and Kurds in 1950s. To day, the Kurds constitute about 70%. In the city of Khanaqin 80% of members of the city council are from Kurdish political groups. There are 21 governmental offices in

Khanaqin 18 are from the Kurdish political parties. The other three are Turkmen supports the interests of the Kurdish parties.

- Kiz Rabat has about 20% Kurdish population. In the city council the percentage of the Kurds is 47%.
- Jalawlaa, the estimated number of the Kurds is 20% and the percentage of the Kurds in the city council is 40%.

#### Beledruz

- Beledruz
- The Kurdish percentage in Mendeli is 25, their percentage in the city council is 50%
- In Qazzaniya there are almost no Kurdish inhabitants, 10% of the city council is from the Kurdish nationality.

#### Kifri district

- Kifri district is well known for its Turkmen nature, after extensive immigration, today, the percentage of Turkmen are about 20, the number of the city council members are 10, all are Kurdish. In Kifri there are 17 government offices, the directors of 16 are from the Kurds.
- Kara Tepe is a well known Turkmen region, the percentages of the Kurds is about 10, 40% of the city council members are Kurds

Erbil is a well known Turkmen city, the 41 members of the city council distributed between two Kurdish parties. The percentage of the Kurds in this city today is about 75%.

Kerkuk city population number according the ration cards was 870,000 at the day of occupation, this number increased to 1,544,809 according to the statistics of the Iraqi general election of December 2005. The number of the voters in the same election was 803,301 which almost equal to the total Kerkuk population at the day of occupation. Today, the Kurdish political parties hold the decision making mechanism in their hands with 63% of the city council.

Mosul city is predominantly Arabic, it has 41 members in the city council, and the number of the Kurds is 31 which make 76%.

I think that the European authorities needs to abandon the passive and indirect support to the Iraq by presenting the large financial help through the United Nations and start to intervene directly to stop the human rights violations.

Thank you very much for your interest and attention.

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