

Kurdish authorities and Iraqi Indigenous populations: the suppression of Iraqi Yazidis

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In two recent reports, SOITM have outlined Kurdish attempts to undermine the positions of two other Iraqi indigenous communities.^{1, 2} This report presents a brief description of some of the Human Rights violations that have been inflicted on the Yazidi community at the hands of Kurdish Peshmerga militants and security services in the so-called 'disputed region' – a territory which is controlled and administered after occupation by the Kurdish authorities.

Yazidis comprise an important element in the rich Iraqi cultural mosaic. Their population size, according to the Yazidi's sources, is estimated to be around ¾ million – the majority of which live in the province of Mosul. The **Yazidi regions** were dominated by **the Kurdish militia** after the fall of the dictatorship. Numerous attacks on the Yazidi community after the dictatorship, imposed upon them isolation and a denial of important basic human rights.

The following events, presented by Yazidi member of the Iraqi parliament Mr. Amin Farhan to the European Commission, the European Union and the European Parliament several weeks ago, highlight some of these human rights violations:

- Over the past two years, Farhan has been prevented from visiting his constituency for fear of assassination.
- Farhan claims that more than 50 Yazidi politicians and activists have been arrested, persecuted and threatened by the Kurdish militant parties.
- After visiting Europe last year and organising several important meetings with large numbers of Yazidi communities in Europe, Farhan observed that the relatives of the Yazidi activists who attended or participated in the organization of the conference were arrested and intimidated by the Kurdish authorities in Yazidi regions. Consequently, during a recent visit, a large number of Yazidi organizations and activists declined to organize meetings with Yazidi community.

Deprivation of Ration Cards

Farhan outlines that the Yazidi region has historically been a district in the Mosul province. The fall of the dictatorship presented Kurdish authorities with an opportunity to control the region and to rebuild the administration with members from Kurdish political parties. Yazidis who opposed the Kurdish parties were dismissed or intimidated. The head of administration in a major Yazidi district was dismissed by Kurdish authorities - was forced to flee and to seek asylum in Germany.

Kurdish political parties with their Peshmerga militants and Kurdish security services implemented various plans during the following 5 years, intended to spread Kurdish influence in non-Kurdish regions – this included the transfer of centres of administration. Such authority transfers included the movement of the Food Ration Board of the Yazidi region from Mosul province to the Duhok Kurdish province. Protests from Yazidi authorities forced the Iraqi Government to transfer the Food Ration Board back to the Mosul province. However, thereafter, Kurdish militias controlling the area began threatening shop owners tasked with distribution of the Food Rations. Yazidi authorities say that the threats imposed by the Kurdish Peshmerga and Security Service are pivotal in depriving Yazidi regions from food rations today.

A method of intimidation

The ongoing intimidation of Amin Farhan after his recent visit to Europe has resulted in the detention, on the 20 October 2008 of three of his Guards in Duhok. These men are listed as: Nasir Khayri Kallo, Mirza Khalaf and Rasho Qasim Kaja. Their whereabouts has still not been announced.

The aggressive attitude of the Kurdish authorities was most recently seen in a session of the parliament today. Kurdish Member of Parliament Arif Tayfur of the Barzani Party endeavoured to prevent Amin Farhan from giving a speech. However, protests from a large number of parliament members allowed him to continue. The following are extracts taken from his speech:

“The security forces of the Duhok region are surely members of the Kurdish parties; accordingly they take the orders from their parties and apply the party agendas” “let us ask ourselves, has the Kurdish region become a den of arrests of those who are not loyal to the Kurdish parties? Does the security service work according to their own devices and are there no official regulations and laws to rule them? Are the laws in Kurdish region other than that of Iraq? Should we not visit our cities in Kurdish region?” “There are many other members of our party were arrested at the same place.”

The intimidations, killings and deprivation of work or business opportunities of the non-Kurdish Iraqis by the Kurdish authorities in the Kurdish and non-Kurdish regions controlled by Kurdish militant parties, has forced large sections of these indigenous communities to work for Kurdish parties against their will and ultimately against their own parties. Consequently, Kurdish authorities use these groups to demonstrate a support and convince the international community that the Iraqi minorities support Kurdish authorities and prefer the Kurdish regional government.

In light of the above mentioned facts, the international community should work to stop the continued attempts of the Kurdish authorities to suppress Iraqi indigenous populations.

Reference:

SOITM Press Releases

1. “To the international community: The Iraqi people are in severe need of your help”
http://www.turkmen.nl/1A_soitm/PR.20-G1308a.doc
2. “The attempts of Kurdish authorities to subdue the Iraqi non-ruling communities (minorities) continue”
http://www.turkmen.nl/1A_soitm/PR.23-G2908.doc