

MPs call on the British Government to recognize the mass murder of Iraqi Kurds as genocide

London 2 July 2012: Today, a [petition](#), sponsored by Nadhim Zahawi MP and supported by other MPs and peers, will be officially launched in the Houses of Parliament urging the British Government to recognize the genocide of Iraqi Kurds prior to and during Saddam Hussein's brutal regime. The petition requires 100,000 signatures from the public to trigger a debate in Parliament.

Hundreds of thousands of Kurdish men, women and children were murdered during a systematic attempt to exterminate the Kurdish population in Iraq from 1963 to the late 1980s. Only after Saddam Hussein was captured in 2003, were the first of hundreds of mass graves discovered, and the true scale of the horror revealed. Nine years later, expert forensic teams are excavating the mass graves and identifying the bodies so they can at last be returned home to loved ones for burial.

The petition will be officially launched at the Kurdistan Regional Government's (KRG) annual summer reception today on the Terrace at the Houses of Parliament, by Ms Bayan Sami Abdel Rahman, KRG High Representative to the UK, and Minister Falah Mustafa Bakir, the Head of the KRG Department of Foreign Relations.

Robert Halfon, MP and Vice-Chair All-Party Parliamentary Group on the Kurdistan Region in Iraq, says: "The facts are these: if you define genocide as scientifically planned mass murder with various stages of development - notably, marginalisation, demonisation, and eradication, - then the Kurds suffered genocide."

Ms Bayan Sami Abdel Rahman, KRG High Representative to the UK, says: "The support of British MPs and peers for the recognition of the Kurdish genocide in Iraq is a testament to Britain as the home of democracy and the beacon for human rights and compassion. The people of Kurdistan are forward-looking and optimistic but we will never forget what happened to our people. By signing this petition, the people of Britain will be giving their support to the men, women and children who were killed while the world remained silent. That silence can end now."

Nadham Zahawi, MP for Stratford, Co-Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Kurdistan and sponsor of the petition, says: "Genocide is the worst crime that can be committed by humanity, and it befell Iraqi Kurds. It is our duty to remember and honour the victims. The recognition of the genocide by the British Government is crucial to ensuring that it never happens again."

KRG Foreign Minister Falah Mustafa Bakir says: "For us, the genocide is not history, it's a living memory that is present with every Kurd today. There are survivors with health problems from the use of chemical weapons, victims with psychological problems after the trauma of what they witnessed, after losing loved ones in the most barbaric ways. There are large numbers of widows and orphans. For them, recognition of the genocide is a crucial acknowledgement of what they suffered and continue to suffer. Most importantly, recognition will help prevent such atrocities against the Kurds from ever happening again."

Survivor Kamaran Haider, who now lives in Portsmouth, was 11 years old when chemical weapons were dropped on the Kurdish town of Halabja in Kurdistan in 1988. As many as 5,000 men, women and children were killed and tens of thousands of people injured in the attack. Kamaran's four brothers, his sister and both his parents all died.

He says: "I lost my whole family. I watched them die in front of me. My skin was burning and I couldn't see or move. After three days in a bomb shelter surrounded by dead bodies, I was rescued. Please sign this petition to help win justice for my family and for the thousands of people who died during the genocide."

To sign the petition, please click here: <http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/31014>

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Notes to Editors:

For further information, pictures or if you would like to organize an interview with Minister Bakir and/or Ms Rahman prior to or after the reception, please contact Amy Bourke or Helen Ayres at KRG@luther.co.uk or call 0207 618 9193 to arrange it.

About the genocide in Iraq

- The genocide of Kurdish people in Iraq began in the 1960s and continued until the late 1980s.
- In 2006, the International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP) estimated there being 270 mass graves in Iraq containing between 10 and 10,000 bodies in each grave.
- An estimated 180,000 Kurdish people were killed between 1987 and 1988 alone during Saddam Hussein's genocidal campaign called Anfal. The true scale of the killing from the 1960s to 1990 is not yet known.
- In the 1980s, the Kurdish population was also attacked with chemical weapons. During the most vicious assault, Saddam Hussein dropped bombs containing chemical weapons on the Kurdish city of Halabja gassing as many as 5,000 men, women and children to death indiscriminately and leaving tens of thousands of people injured. They died slowly, in unimaginable pain from chemical burns. Of those who survived, many still live with painful injuries and many children are born with birth defects.
- In 1983, 8,000 men and boys of 'battle age' from the Kurdish Barzani tribe were rounded up on trucks and vanished. The bodies are now being discovered in mass graves. From then on, men and boys as young as 13 were targeted, driven far away from their homes in trucks and executed en masse. Many victims were tied together, made to stand on the lip of pre-dug graves and shot in the back so they would fall forward into them. Others were made to lie down in pairs, sardine-style, next to mounds of fresh corpses before being killed. Some, who didn't die from gun shots were then buried alive.
- Of the total Kurdish victims, an estimated 70% were men, according to Human Rights Watch
- 90% of Kurdish villages and more than 20 small towns and cities were completely destroyed during the campaign to wipe out the Kurdish population in Iraq.

Who says it was genocide?

- In 1993, US-based Human Rights Watch launched an extensive investigation into the attack on the Kurds by Saddam Hussein's regime and concluded that it was genocide.
- In 2005, the court in the Hague established that the chemical bombing in Kurdistan constituted genocide in a landmark case in 2005 - the Frans Van Anraat Trial. During the Appeal, it was later referred to as 'war crimes'.

- The Iraqi High Tribunal found Sultan Hashim Ahmad, Hussein Rashid al-Tikriti, and Ali Hassan al-Majid (known as Chemical Ali) guilty of genocide in 2007.
- The research institute Swiss Peace recognized the genocide in 2008.
- In 2008 the Iraqi Presidential Council approved Resolution 26 ratifying a parliamentary resolution condemning the crimes of Saddam Hussein's regime against the Kurds as acts of genocide. This resolution affirmed the previous parliamentary resolution that declared all acts committed against the Kurds in Iraqi-Kurdistan by the former regime were to be considered genocide.
- In March 2010, the Iraqi Supreme Court ruled that the 1988 attacks on the Kurdish population were indeed genocide.