



FCO Middle East Minister addresses Kurdish genocide survivors on 26th anniversary of Anfal

182,000 men, women and children were killed in a carefully planned, eight-stage genocide called Anfal, carried out by Saddam Hussein's regime against the Kurdish people, in 1988.

Today, the Minister of State for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Rt Hon Hugh Robertson MP, joins Kurdish officials, survivors of the genocide, members of the diaspora and British friends in remembrance.

Westminster, London 7 April 2014

London, UK (UK.KRG.org) - The Rt Hon Hugh Robertson MP, Minister of State for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, will today address Kurdish officials, the Kurdish community in Britain, survivors and eye-witnesses – as well as parliamentarians and friends of Kurdistan – as they gather in remembrance of the 182,000 men, women and children who died at the hands of the Ba'athist Regime during the Anfal Campaign.

Al Anfal, a phrase taken from a verse in the Koran which means 'the spoils of war', was the term used by Saddam Hussein in reference to a systematic operation – which included the use of aerial bombings, starvation, mass burials and chemical weapons – to wipe out the Kurdish people in Iraq.

The Anfal Campaign marked the peak of a wider genocide which began decades earlier in which hundreds of thousands of innocent people perished, families were torn apart and 4,500 villages were destroyed. This consisted of – but was by no means limited to – the repeated use of chemical weapons, including in Halabja; the killing of Faylee Kurds throughout the 1970s and 1980s; and the disappearance of 8,000 Barzani boys and men in 1983.

Although Anfal was the official name for the 1988 killing campaign, in the minds of the Kurdish people, it is today synonymous with the entire genocide which, spanning decades, was a crime committed while much of the world remained silent.

The Kurdish community in London is marking Anfal with a remembrance ceremony on April 7. Survivors and the families of those who were killed, some of whom have settled in Britain, will speak about their experience. Among them is a woman who escaped execution as a child thanks to an act of kindness by a stranger and a man whose father, uncles and several other male relatives were rounded up and disappeared when he was just four years old.

In the Kurdistan Region in Iraq, April 14 has been designated Anfal Day since 2007 in an attempt to ensure that lives lost in the genocide are not forgotten. However, the people of Kurdistan are still having to fight for this act of genocide to be formally recognised by the international community.

Despite the UK Parliament's formal recognition of Anfal – together with the years of mass murder that led up to it – as genocide in February 2013, the struggle for the UK Government and, indeed, governments across the world and international bodies such as the UN and the European Commission, to follow suit continues. Justice for the Kurdish genocide is, as a result, yet to be achieved.

The commemoration event is being held in Westminster and is organised by the Kurdistan Regional Government's UK Representation, which has campaigned alongside the Kurdish community and British and international friends for the formal recognition of the Kurdish genocide.

The Rt Hon Hugh Robertson MP, Minister of State for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, said, 'I am privileged to have been invited to speak at tonight's Anfal Memorial Day commemoration event, and to be able to offer the UK Government's support to the survivors of the attacks and to the friends and relatives of those who were killed. It is vital to remember the horrific events experienced during the Anfal, which left tens of thousands dead and many more displaced, and to reaffirm our belief that no group should be allowed to suffer such a fate again.'

Minister Falah Mustafa, Head of the KRG's Department of Foreign Relations will also be speaking at the event. He said, 'We welcome the UK Minister's participation in this community act of remembrance and the acknowledgement of what the people of Kurdistan suffered in the Anfal Campaign. This is a compassionate gesture and, we hope, a step in the right direction. The KRG's policy is to raise international awareness of the Kurdish genocide and to gain formal recognition by parliaments and governments around the world until we are able to persuade the UN to do the same.'

Ms Bayan Sami Abdul Rahman, the Kurdistan Regional Government High Representative to the UK, said, 'We are very pleased that the Foreign and Commonwealth Minister, the Rt Hon Hugh Robertson, is commemorating Anfal Day with the Kurdish community here in London. His presence at this event is an important and meaningful show of goodwill by the British Government. We need the British Government to follow in the steps of the British Parliament by politically and morally recognising that genocide was committed against our people, demonstrating to the people of Kurdistan, the world and future generations everywhere that Britain stands against these horrific crimes and will do all it can to prevent genocide from happening again – to the Kurdish people or, indeed, any other oppressed people in the world.'

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Notes to Editors:

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Relevant websites:

KRG UK Representation: <http://uk.krg.org/>

Justice for genocide campaign: <http://www.justice4genocide.com/>

Key facts about the genocide

1. The genocide of Kurdish people in Iraq began in the 1960s and continued until the late 1980s, beginning with the arabisation of villages around Kirkuk in 1963.
2. The genocide later involved the deportation and disappearances of Faylee Kurds in the 1970s-80s, the murder of 8,000 male Barzanis in 1983, the use of chemical weapons in the late 1980s, most notably Halabja, and finally the Anfal campaign of 1988.
3. 4,500 villages were razed to the ground between 1976 and 1988 undermining the potential of Iraqi Kurdistan's agricultural resources and destroying its rural way of life and heritage.
4. From February to September 1988, the regime implemented the Anfal campaign, which was a comprehensive plan to destroy all life in rural areas of Kurdistan through eight stages of military operations. The KRG estimates that 182,000 Kurdish people were killed during the Anfal campaign alone. Independent sources estimate 100,000 to more than 150,000 deaths and as many as 100,000 widows and an even greater number of orphans.
5. The true scale of the killing from the 1960s to 1990 is not yet known.
6. In 2006, the Iraq Human Rights Ministry estimated there to be 270 mass graves in Iraq containing between 10 and 10,000 bodies in each. However, the International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP) believes that there are many more mass graves than this estimate. So far, eight out of 10 mass graves excavated in South of Iraq have been Kurdish graves.
7. In 2013, twenty Iraqi Kurds brought a claim under the French judicial system, against the companies that supplied chemicals to Iraq, facilitating attacks such as that carried out on Halabja in 1988.
8. Gendercide: Throughout the Kurdish Anfal, men and boys of 'battle age' were rounded up and 'disappeared' en masse. Most of these men and boys were captured, transported to mass graves and shot in mass executions. Of the total victims of Anfal, an estimated 70% were men, approximately aged 15 to 50. [*'Iraq's crime of genocide' by Human Rights Watch 1994, p.266 – 268*].

Recognition of the genocide to date: countries and groups

The UK Parliament: In February 2013, in a historic Parliamentary debate on the Kurdish genocide, the UK Parliament formally recognised the mass murder of Kurdish people in Iraq as an act of genocide. The

debate was secured by Kurdish-born British Conservative MP and Co-Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on the Kurdistan Region Nadhim Zahawi MP and other members of the group.

United States: On 19 November 2013, US Representatives Chris Van Hollen and Marsha Blackburn, tabled a resolution in the Congress calling for the House of Representatives and the government to consider and recognise Kurdish Genocide. The resolution H.Res.422 deploras the genocide crimes committed against the Kurdish people and calls for the United States Government to examine the decades-long campaign aimed at exterminating the Kurds and to recognise the crimes as acts of genocide according to the 1948 United Nations Genocide Convention, to which the United States is a signatory. It is hoped that Congress will vote on the resolution this year.

South Korea: In June 2013, the South Korean parliament also recognised the genocide.

Sweden: In December 2012, the Swedish Parliament recognised that the atrocities committed by Saddam Hussein against the Iraqi Kurds constituted genocide. Swedish recognition was established following a vote organized by the Swedish Foreign Policy Committee on the subject. The proposal to recognise the genocide won unanimous support from the eight political parties which form the Parliament.

Norway: In November 2012, the Norwegian government recognised the judgment of the Iraqi High Tribunal that the Anfal campaign and the chemical attack on Halabja were genocide.

Iraq

- **The Iraqi High Tribunal** recognised four crimes committed against the Kurdish people as acts of genocide: the Halabja chemical weapons attack of March 16, 1988, the Anfal campaign, February to September 1988, the deportations of Faylee Kurds during the 1980s, and the Barzani disappearances of 1983.
- **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.
- 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.

Swiss Peace: The research institute Swiss Peace recognised the genocide in 2008.

The Hague: In 2005, Franz Van Anraat, a Dutch trader, was found guilty by the Dutch national court in The Hague, of complicity in war crimes by selling chemical weapons to Saddam Hussein's regime. He was initially found guilty of genocide charges but those were reverted to war crimes by the Court of Appeals. However, all prosecutors in the Appeals case stated that the crimes constituted genocide.

Human Rights Watch: In 1993, US-based Human Rights Watch launched an extensive investigation into the Anfal campaign against the Kurds by Saddam Hussein's regime and concluded that it was genocide. The findings were published in a comprehensive report in 1993, titled *Genocide in Iraq: The Anfal Campaign Against the Kurds* (<http://www.hrw.org/reports/1993/iraqanfal/>).