



**JUSTICE FOR IRAQI KURDS**

It's time to recognise the truth

## **‘Justice For Iraqi Kurds’ campaign marks anniversary of male massacre with call to British Government to recognize the genocide in Iraq**

**31 July 2012:** Today, 29 years ago, 8,000 Kurdish men and boys from the Barzani tribe in Iraq were rounded up by Saddam Hussein’s army, loaded onto trucks and ‘disappeared’, leaving a town full of women. Decades later, the bodies are being exhumed from mass graves and brought back to these women to bury. The British Government does not recognize this targeted act of mass murder as genocide. Today, the ‘Justice For Iraqi Kurds’ campaign calls on the public to sign its petition to urge the British Government to open its eyes.

Petition: <http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/31014>

Dawood Yahya Barzani, 38, now living in Hull, was nine when the army came. His family, along with thousands of others, were living in mud huts in camps built by Saddam Hussein around Erbil. He remembers: “They arrived early in the morning, about 4am. They were terrifying but we were used to seeing them. It usually meant a beating or an execution. But this time, there were hundreds of them. They started searching all the houses, telling us that Saddam had called a meeting and all the men were to go. They would only be gone a few hours. My father and brother suspected it was a trick and hid.

“The soldiers had a measuring stick and no matter how old you were, if you were taller than the stick, they took you. My cousin, Jemal was 15 and tall. He was loaded onto a truck. My Uncle and four other cousins were taken too. Two hours passed, then days, weeks, months, and they didn’t come back. The camps had no men left, only women screaming and wailing, surrounded by small children. We never saw my relatives again. There was no human rights there and I was only a boy, I couldn’t do anything but I do know that what happened to them was genocide and I ask everyone to sign this petition for recognition.”

Following the round up of Barzani men, the wives, children and mothers, dressed in black and waited for them to return. When Saddam Hussein fell in 2003, these women woke up every morning expecting them to walk through the front door. They never did.

The Barzani men were taken from their families and transported to southern Iraq. Thereafter they disappeared and have never been seen again. All efforts to find out what happened to

them or where they had gone, including diplomatic inquiries by several European countries, failed. This act of gendercide left a country of widows – women whose lives were torn apart.

In 1993, Saddam Hussein strongly hinted at the final fate of the Barzani men when he said: "They betrayed the country and they betrayed the covenant, and we meted out a stern punishment to them, and they went to hell."

Last year, the Iraqi Supreme Court found six former Baath Regime officials, including former Iraqi deputy prime minister Tariq Aziz, guilty of murdering the 8,000 Kurdish men and boys as young as 13. The court ruled that this mass slaughter was an act of genocide. The 'Justice For Iraqi Kurds' campaign urges the British Government to do the same.

Commenting on the 29<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Barzani disappearance and the 'Justice For Iraqi Kurds' campaign, Bayan Sami Abdul Rahman, Kurdistan Regional Government High Representative to the UK, says: "We need international recognition of the horror endured. Recognition is the first step towards prosecuting those individuals inside Iraq and out who were responsible for the genocide in Iraqi Kurdistan. As well as mass shootings, the Kurdish people were attacked with chemical weapons. The companies which sold these weapons are still operating and still need to be brought to justice.

"Saddam Hussein was never tried or convicted for the genocide. He might be dead but justice has not yet been done. From the 1960s to the late 1980s, Kurdish men, women and children were murdered en masse in an attempt to exterminate them completely. The British Government ended this killing when they created the no fly zone over northern Iraq and for that we will always be grateful. Now we ask that they recognize formally the genocide which took place so Kurdish people in Iraq get the justice they deserve."

**ENDS**

**Notes to Editors:**

For further information, to organize an interview or photos, please contact Stephanie Blott, Amy Bourke or Helen Ayres at [KRG@luther.co.uk](mailto:KRG@luther.co.uk) or call 0207 618 9193 to arrange it.

Please see the petition here: <http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/31014>

Please see the website: [www.justice4genocide.com](http://www.justice4genocide.com)

**Key facts about the Barzani 'disappearance'**

- The reburial of the Barzani men who disappeared, which you mention in the press release, buried only 512 remains of those missing, so the rest of the over 7,000 men are still to be found. The 512 were unearthed from a mass grave in southern Iraq, in the remote desert triangle

formed by Iraq's borders with Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. Large photos of the forensic work from excavation show skulls with bullet holes, and many wearing Kurdish headdress typical of the Barzani clan.

- The funeral of the 512 missing Barzani men was held two days before the opening of Saddam Hussein's trial in Baghdad. But Kurds wanted to see Hussein convicted of his government's crimes against Kurds, his death alone did not bring justice to the Kurds, as Bayan says in her quote.
- **Barzani Widows:** The effects of the mass murder of the Barzani men are still in evidence today. The Barzani widows still wear black and both they, and the survivors of the wider genocide operation continue to struggle. An official survey conducted in 2007 found that genocide widows make up about 15 per cent of the Iraqi Kurdistan population – an exact figure was not provided.<sup>[1]</sup> It is especially difficult for the widows of the victims living in patriarchal societies. Remarriage is difficult if not next to impossible as Iraqi legislation stated that a woman cannot remarry until her husband's fate is determined. It wasn't until 1999 that the Kurdistan parliament passed a law stating that those who disappeared during the genocide were declared dead officially. But widows weren't aware of this law since it was not made public until the complete fall of Saddam's government. Unfortunately this left many women helpless since women at middle age aren't thought of as marriage worthy anymore. The widows who don't have the option of marriage as a means of support struggle to survive.

### **Some key facts about the genocide**

- 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.
- 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.