



**JUSTICE FOR IRAQI KURDS**

*It's time to recognise the truth*

### **Kurdish Genocide documentary by award-winning team screened in Edinburgh**

- *Supported by the Justice4Genocide campaign* -

Beyond Borders premiered the documentary *Kulajo: My Heart Is Darkened* this Wednesday 22nd August 2012, at the Edinburgh Filmhouse, as part of the Beyond Borders 'Small Nations in Cinema' season.

The event was sponsored by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and supported by the Justice4Genocide e-petition campaign calling on the British Government to recognise the genocide against the Kurds in Iraq prior to and during Saddam Hussein's regime.

Ms Bayan Sami Abdul Rahman, the KRG High Representative to the UK, reiterating the importance of this campaign on behalf of the genocide victims and survivors, said, "The people of Kurdistan are forward-looking and optimistic but we will never forget what happened to our people. By signing this petition, British citizens will be giving their support to the men, women and children who were killed while the world remained silent. That silence can end now.

Ms Rahman added, "The support and recognition by the British Government will also enable us to get a step closer to the formal legal recognition by the United Nations, which is key to achieving justice, reparations, and healing our peoples' wounds".

Kulajo was one of the thousands of Kurdish villages targeted by Saddam Hussein during his murderous 1988 Anfal campaign. The documentary *Kulajo: My Heart Is Darkened* allows the people – mostly women and children – of one small community to tell their extraordinary stories. Anfal was a comprehensive plan for destroying all life in the rural areas of Kurdistan in eight stages of military operations; the focus of Anfal varied from one stage to another.

The documentary is Executive Produced by the Emmy-Award winning team of Gwynne Roberts and Sadie Wykeham, directed by ex-BBC award winning Director Helena Appio and produced by Joel Wykeham.

At the screening, film-director Gwynne Roberts and his team expressed their support for the e-petition campaign. Mr Roberts said, "I have travelled all over the world to film documentaries, but the story of the Kurdish people is the one which affects me most, because of the sense of pain and injustice."

He added, "The story of the Kurdish Genocide is highly significant for the world today as, for example, the attack on the village of Balisan in April 1987 was the first instance of a Government using chemical weapons against their own people, which the international community must learn from, especially given the current situation in Syria."

Baroness Elizabeth Smith, Chairman of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe and Hanzala Malik MSP attended the screening.

Hanzala Malik MSP for Glasgow, who has recently visited Kurdistan with the all-party group on the Kurdistan Region parliamentary mission, said, "It's astonishing that we still continue to carry out barbaric acts against mankind. This was a deliberate, targeted military campaign based on ethnicity, and clearly we have not learned the lessons from the Holocaust. We need to formally recognise that this was genocide so that we can bring the perpetrators to justice, and we need to take responsibility for what happened so we can learn the necessary lessons."

Two representatives from the Scottish-Kurdish community, Mr Kawa Ali and Dr Massoud Murad, assisted with the promotion of the e-petition after the screening.

The genocide of the Kurdish people in Iraq began in the 1960s and continued until the late 1980s. Independent sources estimate that more than 150,000 people were killed, as many as 100,000 women were widowed and an even greater number of children were orphaned during the Anfal campaign alone, orchestrated between 23 February and 6 September 1988.

This week, 25 August, marks the beginning of the final stage of the anfal operation which targeted mostly adult and teenage males of the Badinan district in the Zagros mountains of the Kurdistan region.

Sign the petition: <http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/31014>

[www.justice4genocide.com](http://www.justice4genocide.com)

-ENDS-

#### **Notes to Editors:**

For further information 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.

Beyond Borders is an international organisation dedicated to facilitating dialogue and cultural exchange between cultural leaders of small nations in an effort to promote understanding and help reduce conflict. Please visit the website for more information - [www.beyondbordersscotland.com](http://www.beyondbordersscotland.com).

Kurdistan Memory Programme (KMP) is directed by Gwynne Roberts and Sadie Wykeham. It is an ambitious project to document the triumphs and tragedies of the Kurds in modern times. It seeks to inform the work about the significance of Kurdish history, and its role in shaping the political contours of the Middle East. The goal of the KMP is to establish a permanent, faithful and factual record of past with the aim of preventing any future repetition. The KMP is funded by the Kurdistan Regional Government.

#### **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 Iraq Government estimated there being 270 mass graves in Iraq containing between 10 and 10,000 bodies in each grave. However, the International Commission on

Missing persons have recently estimated that there are significantly more mass graves in the country.

- The Kurdistan Regional Government estimates that over 180,000 Kurdish people were killed between February and September 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. Hundreds of small scale chemical attacks took place against the Kurds. 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. Halabja is famous for being the largest ever chemical attack on a civilian population in history.
- 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 did not die from gun shots were then buried alive.
- In 1993, US-based Human Rights Watch launched an extensive investigation into the 1988 attacks on the Kurds by Saddam Hussein's regime and concluded that it was genocide (Human Rights Watch, The Anfal Campaign Against the Kurds, 1993.)
- 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.
- 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.
- Also 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 Iraq-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.
- In August 2011, The Iraqi Court of Justice, Iraqi Council of Representative, and the Iraq's Parliament officially recognised the Faylee killings as genocide.