



JUSTICE FOR IRAQI KURDS

It's time to recognise the truth

Survivors of Saddam Hussein's regime living in Britain call on British people to stand by them and recognise the genocide against the Kurdish people in Iraq

29 October 2012: This weekend survivors of Iraq's genocide living in Manchester, Leeds, Birmingham and London took to the streets of their home cities to ask the public to support their call for the British Government to recognise the mass murder of Iraqi Kurds by Saddam Hussein as genocide.

Supporters on the streets of the four cities were asked to sign an e-petition calling for the British Government to recognise the genocide. Over the course of the weekend over a thousand people signed the petition, meaning that only 2,000 more signatures are needed in order to prompt a response from Government. To trigger a debate in Parliament, 100,000 are needed.

The e-petition can be found here: <http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/31014>

Within each city, the names of the Kurdish people who were brutally murdered in Iraq were read out to the public. The event was called 'The Endless Roll Call' to reflect the huge volume of men, women and children who were shot en masse, gassed by chemical weapon attacks, starved to death in camps or simply 'disappeared'.

Thousands of Kurdish people who fled Saddam Hussein's murderous regime now live in the UK. But hundreds of thousands of men, women and children weren't able to escape. From 1987 to 1988 alone, an estimated 180,000 Kurdish people were killed during Saddam Hussein's genocidal campaign; enough people to fill the Olympic stadium in London more than twice.

The mass killing of Kurdish people in Iraq started in the 1960s, long before Saddam Hussein. It was a lengthy campaign, perpetrated over four decades, to systematically wipe out the Kurdish people yet it is currently not recognized by the British Government as genocide. The 'Justice4genocide' campaign launched the e-petition calling for this to change.

Dr. Eymen Qadir, 45, survived the genocide. He fled Iraq in 2001 and has lived in Leeds for ten years. As a medical student in Iraq, he witnessed the attacks under Saddam's regime. Many of the patients he worked with were victims of chemical weapons. He also witnessed hoards of people being driven away by security forces, never to be seen again. Eymen lost several members of extended family under the regime.

He says: "We need to recognise the genocide so it does not happen again, so that people need not suffer the same as we did."

Commenting on the 'Justice4genocide' campaign event, 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. Justice has not yet been done. The British Government ended the 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 survivors living in the UK, and in Iraq, get the justice they deserve.”

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

For further information or photos, please contact Amy Bourke or Helen Ayres at KRG@luther.co.uk or call 0207 618 9193 to arrange it.

More information about the campaign is here: <http://www.justice4genocide.com/>

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.

About Kurdish people in the UK

Across the UK, there are an estimated 200,000 to 250,000 Kurds from Iraq, Turkey, Iran and increasingly from Syria. In some constituencies, the number of Kurdish voters is such that they can swing an election result. Most Kurds made their way to Britain as refugees. The first were the Iraqi Kurds who have been seeking sanctuary in Britain since the 1960s when the first waves of genocide against them began. By the late 1980s, the number of Iraqi-Kurdish refugees had risen substantially as people fled the chemical attacks, the forced mass movement of families to concentration camps and the disappearance of thousands of people at the hands of the dictatorship that ruled Iraq.

Having settled in the UK, many Kurds have and continue to contribute to British society. In Leeds, Manchester, Birmingham, London, there are many small Kurdish businesses. There are dozens of Kurdish restaurants and Kurdish stall-holders in local markets. There are several senior doctors and consultants in the NHS who are Kurdish and they have their own Kurdish Medical Association. Britain's leading universities, including Manchester, Leeds, Birmingham, Warwick, Hull, Leicester and London, have attracted hundreds of Kurdish students from Iraq who have won a scholarship from the Kurdistan Regional Government. The first Iraqi-Kurdish member of parliament (Nadhim Zahawi, Stratford Upon Avon) was elected in 2010. His family also fled Iraq when he was a child in the 1970s.