

For immediate release

Tom Hardie-Forsyth, former NATO Senior Committee Chairman, warns US Government against the sale of fighter jets to Iraq

17th January 2013, London: Today, at the international conference marking the 25th anniversary of the chemical weapons attack on Halabja, Tom Hardie-Forsyth warned the US Government against the sale of fighter jets to Iraq, fearing a repeat of the genocide which took place under Saddam Hussein's regime when more than 180,000 Kurdish men, women and children were murdered. During the atrocities Saddam Hussein used fighter jets to drop chemical weapons on Kurdish villages, including Halabja, where 5,000 people were gassed to death.

Calling on the international community not to sleepwalk into another genocide; Tom Hardie-Forsyth, who witnessed the aftermath of the genocide whilst serving in Iraq in the British Army as part of Operation Safe Haven, recounted how he saw villages which had been meticulously destroyed and villagers who spoke again and again of the horrors they had witnessed.

Hardie-Forsyth said: "As a British Army Captain, we crossed into the mountains of Kurdistan in the Spring of 1991. I remember the mud, the stink, the children dying of dysentery. I expected destruction associated with a short conflict. But what we saw was different. Village after village had been meticulously destroyed. People were terrified. They kept saying 'Anfal' [genocide] and refused to go back to their homes."

Today's international conference has again highlighted how, during Saddam's Hussein's regime, thousands of ordinary Kurdish people suffered unspeakable cruelty and violence with many ending up in mass graves or dying from chemical weapons attacks, while the world remained largely silent. Most importantly, Hardie-Forsyth and his fellow speakers including former French Foreign Minister, Dr. Bernard Kouchner, raised the question of international recognition of the Kurdish genocide in Iraq.

Ms Bayan Sami Abdul Rahman, High Representative to the UK, Kurdistan Regional Government says: "Since we announced this conference, three Kurdish women activists were assassinated in Paris. They strived for Kurdish rights and their murder reminds us that even today, in the heart of Western Europe, Kurds are not safe. Sadly, our history is interspersed with assassinated leaders and activists, yet few Kurds think to give up the struggle for Kurdish rights or to evade the duty to remember and honour those who have been killed. Saddam Hussein was never tried for his crimes of targeted mass murder of the Kurdish people and only Sweden and Norway have recognized his crimes as genocide. More than 26,900 British people have signed an e-petition urging the British Government to recognize what happened in Iraq as genocide. We hope the Government is listening."

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

For further information or photos, please contact Stephanie Blott, Amy Bourke or Helen Ayres at KRG@luther.co.uk or call 07825 595 538.

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

Campaign website: <http://www.justice4genocide.com/index.php>

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.