



JUSTICE FOR IRAQI KURDS

It's time to recognise the truth

Kurdish genocide survivors to deliver message to Number 10

5th September 2013, London: This morning, survivors of the Kurdish genocide in Iraq, including one who survived the chemical weapons attack in Halabja, joined Conservative MP Nadhim Zahawi, Labour MP Meg Munn, Lady Morris (Chair of Conservative Middle East Council) and Kurdistan Regional Government High Representative to the UK, Bayan Sami Abdul Rahman, to deliver 182 signed letters to Number 10 Downing Street calling for recognition of the Kurdish genocide.

Each letter represents 1,000 of the Kurdish men, women and children who make up the 182,000 Kurds murdered by the ruling Iraqi Ba'athist regime from 1987 to 1988 in the systematic Anfal campaign of targeted extermination. The letters call on Prime Minister David Cameron and the UK Government to follow the UK Parliament's lead and recognise this mass murder as genocide.

Saddam Hussein indiscriminately murdered and massacred innocent Kurds with starvation, firing squad, aerial bombing, and chemical weapons. During the chemical bombing of the civilians in Halabja more than 5,000 men, women and children were murdered, many dying slowly in agony. Thousands of people were injured in the attack and many of those who survived were disfigured by the chemicals, developed cancer, and gave birth to babies with severe birth defects.

Kurdish survivors believe the use of chemical weapons in Syria is equally abhorrent and could have been prevented if the chemical weapons attacks by Saddam Hussein had been recognised as genocide. Kurdistan Regional Government High Representative to the UK, Bayan Sami Abdul Rahman, says:

“The Kurdish people said ‘never again’ after chemical weapons were inflicted on them in Iraq but they are still fighting for international recognition that the attacks constitute genocide. The proof of genocide is plain to see in the mass graves being uncovered in Iraq, and the victims deserve international recognition. The horrific events in Syria show more than ever why recognition of the genocide is essential if humanity is to stop the mass slaughter of defenceless people. Over the past year, we have been warning that chemical weapons could be used in Syria and that if the early reports of their use were not responded to by the international community, it would embolden the culprits to use them on a wider scale. For the survivors and all Kurds, the scenes emanating from Syria are a horrific reminder of the genocide in Iraq.”

The 182 letters were signed in Trafalgar Square this year on ‘Anfal’ day, April 14th, to commemorate the annual day of remembrance for the victims of the Kurdish genocide. Saddam Hussein referred to Kurdistan as ‘the Kurdish problem’ and his solution was mass murder. He called it ‘Al Anfal’ meaning the ‘spoils of war’. The Kurdish people call it genocide and today, in their 182 letters, representing 182,000 murdered Kurds, they are asking the Prime Minister to do the same.

Taban Shoresh, 30, survived the Anfal genocide campaign in Iraq and now lives in London. Today, she delivered the letters to Number 10 Downing Street. She says:

“Presenting the letters to Number 10 makes me realise how lucky I am to have survived the terrible ordeal Saddam Hussein put us through and I feel honoured to do something positive for those that died. As a political prisoner and genocide survivor, recognition means a lot to me. Not recognising it makes it seem like it didn't happen, when it clearly did. I'm a living example of this. My son and future generations need to know that the Kurdish genocide happened. Recognition provides justice to those that died and those who survived.”

Kamran Nawrooz Haider was the only member of his family to survive the March 1988 Halabja chemical bombing. He now lives in Portsmouth with his family. He says:

“We have set up conferences, panel discussions and a petition for recognition but this presentation at Number 10 Downing Street is even more important because we will knock on the door of the Prime Minister and tell him that for political, moral and humanitarian reasons, he should accept that the crimes committed by Saddam Hussein to wipe out the Kurds were genocide. We will ask for justice for the victims and the families of the victims. Recognition will help prevent chemical bombardment's like Halabja from happening again.

“Without recognition and justice, all those who were involved in the crimes, especially the governments who helped Saddam Hussein, and the companies who sold chemical and biological weapons to Iraq, will continue to live freely.”

The UK Parliament formally recognised the genocide of the people of Iraqi Kurdistan during a debate in Parliament on February 28th of this year. In passing this motion, the legislative representatives of the British people joined those of Norway, Sweden and South Korea, in demonstrating the need for justice, and leading the condemnation of flagrant crimes against humanity.

Today, the Kurdish people call on the Prime Minister and the UK Government, to follow in the UK Parliament's lead and recognise the Kurdish genocide.

The successful debate in Parliament was secured by Iraqi born British MP and Co-Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Kurdistan, Nadhim Zahawi. Today, he joined the survivors at Number 10 Downing Street. He says:

“No one can undo the devastating suffering inflicted on the Kurdish people in the Anfal Campaign - we cannot change the past. We can however, formally recognise these events today for what they were: genocide. And in doing so, we can positively shape the future, sending a clear message to the world that genocide is recognised and will not be tolerated.”

Labour MP Meg Munn agreed. She said: “There are still many people who don't know the full horror of what happened in Iraq under Saddam Hussein. It's important to recognise this genocide and to learn the lessons as the world is once again witnessing the use of chemical weapons.”

Also in attendance, Lady Morris said: “With the horrors that the world is facing today, it is important we do not forget the past and that we recognise and name the Anfal campaign for what it was – which is genocide – in the hope that it won’t happen again.”

Ends

Notes to Editors:

For further information, please contact Stephanie Blott or Helen Ayres at KRG@luther.co.uk or call 0207 618 9193.

About the campaign

In March 2012, a year-long campaign was launched calling for justice for the Kurds who were murdered en masse in Iraq under Saddam Hussein and the previous ruling Iraqi Ba’athist regime. The campaign centered on a UK Government e-petition which urged the UK Government to formally recognize that what happened was genocide. The petition closed on the 7th March with 27,794 signatures.

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

Recognition of the genocide to date: countries and groups

The UK Parliament: In February 2012, 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.

Human Rights Watch: 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.

The Hague: 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’.

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

Iraq

- **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.

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

Sweden: In December 2012, the Swedish Parliament recognized 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 recognize the genocide won unanimous support from the eight political parties which form the Parliament.

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

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 182,000 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.