

Martin van Bruinessen, 'Genocide of Kurds', in Israel W. Charney (ed.), *The Widening Circle of Genocide* [= *Genocide: A Critical Bibliographic Review*, vol 3]. New Brunswick, NY: Transaction Publishers, pp. 165-191.

# Genocide of the Kurds<sup>1</sup>

## MASSACRES IN KURDISTAN

The Kurds number at present [1992] perhaps 18 to 20 million; their ancestral land, Kurdistan (which has never been a united independent state), has since the First World War been divided among Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran, with a few significant enclaves in the Transcaucasian republics of the former Soviet Union. In all these states the Kurds have at times been at the receiving end of violent government repression claiming numerous lives. In most cases, the military violence was in response to Kurdish separatist aspirations or actual rebellions; in some cases, it was preventive. In the course of the suppression or prevention of rebellions, numerous noncombatants were killed.

In at least some of the cases, more appears to have been involved than just overkill; there are indications of deliberate destruction of part of the Kurdish population. This was the case in Turkey following the rebellions of the 1920s and 1930s, especially in the suppression of the last great rebellion, in Dersim in 1937 and 1938. It has definitely also been the case in Iraq since the mid-1980s; the true scale of the killings and destruction is only gradually becoming apparent. It is also only recently that more information has become available on the deportations of Soviet Kurds under Stalin and on the large numbers of them that perished on the way to Central Asia. I shall not attempt to establish here whether all these cases fit the definition of the Genocide Convention, insofar as that definition hinges on the question of intent. There may remain differences of interpretation on the issue of intent in these cases (with the exception of the 1988 mass killings of Kurds in Iraq, which were clearly planned). However, in each of the cases mentioned, large numbers of Kurdish noncombatants were deliberately killed or left to perish and their Kurdish identity was the major reason for their plight.

Besides physical elimination, the Kurds have also been subject to policies of ethnocide, deliberate destruction of their ethnic identity. This has been most clearly so in Republican Turkey, which until very recently openly pursued a policy of forced assimilation. The Soviet Union appears also to have practiced forced assimilation of Kurds, although here the evidence is as yet less unambiguous. In Iraq, there was no overall policy of forced assimilation to the Arab majority, but there was rather the deliberate annihilation of traditional Kurdish rural life and its economic basis by the wholesale destruction of Kurdish villages and the deportation of their inhabitants (i.e., those that were not killed) to strategic villages, "new towns," or concentration camps. So far, there has been no systematic collection and analysis of data for any of these cases; the published material yields only a fragmentary overview. Recent political changes have made much hitherto unknown documentary material available, and the prospects for a more adequate understanding of what happened are encouraging.

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<sup>1</sup> This chapter was written while I was living in Indonesia, far from any reference library. I wish to thank Professor Joyce Blau, Hamit Bozarslan and the Kurdish Institute of Paris, Vera Beaudin Saeedpour of New York, and Pieter Muller and Michiel Leezenberg of the Netherlands for their kindness in providing me with copies of important materials.

## **MASSACRES OF KURDS AND FORCED ASSIMILATION IN TURKEY**

The Republic of Turkey, established in 1923, was soon confronted with large uprisings in the Kurdish provinces. The major ones took place in 1925, 1930 and 1937, and there were numerous rebellions of more modest scope in between. To some extent these rebellions reflected the reaction of a traditional society to interference by a modern bureaucratic state, but there was also a distinct nationalist dimension to them. The leaders of the uprisings, especially, were motivated by serious grievances over discrimination against the Kurds. The Turkish Army and Air Force suppressed the rebellions with great violence. Thousands may have been killed in combat in the 1925 rebellion alone; almost 50 leaders were hanged after a political trial. Besides these, there were apparently numerous extralegal killings. Kurdish nationalist sources claim that over two hundred villages were destroyed and 15,000 men, women and children were killed in the course of Turkish reprisals (Chirguh, 1930, pp. 49-52).

Soon after the 1925 rebellion, the government set upon a course of mass deportations of Kurds to the western provinces, both as punishment and as a means of preventing future Kurdish uprisings. The large-scale 1930 rebellion provided a further impetus to the resettlement program, which assumed mass dimensions. The Turkish sociologist, İsmail Beşikçi, has presented evidence suggesting that a major objective of the policy of resettlement was the destruction of Kurdish ethnic identity (Beşikçi, 1977; cf. Bruinessen, 1994). Contemporary Kurdish authors give improbably high estimates of the numbers deported: a half million deported within three years, of whom 200,000 are said to have perished (Chirguh, 1930, p. 33), or even a million deported or killed (Bedr Khan, 1927, p. 52-53). More credibly, Chirguh lists village by village how many houses were burned in the repression of the 1925 rebellion, how many persons were killed and how many survived. This adds up to 15,000 killed and 8,750 houses burned (Chirguh 1930, pp. 49-52). These figures are repeated by Rambout (1947) and in his track several other pro-Kurdish authors.

Official Turkish statistics on the deportations, let alone on numbers killed, have not yet come to light. An indication of their scale may be had from a few observations by foreign visitors. The British official, Edmonds, visited the region in May 1930 and reported that the population of Bitlis had been reduced from 40,000 to 5,000, that of Muş from 30,000 to 3,000 (Kutschera, 1979, p. 105). Both towns, it should be noted, used to have sizeable Armenian populations, and the reduction may owe as much to the Armenian deportations and massacres of 1915 as to the more recent disappearance of Kurds. The Norwegian geographer Frödin (1944), who visited Kurdistan in 1936 and again in 1939, confirms that entire villages were destroyed after the 1930 rebellion, and mentions mass executions:

"All Kurds who were found carrying arms were beheaded on the spot. This concerned tens of thousands. Large parts of the remaining Kurdish population were sent to concentration camps in the western provinces" (p. 5).

As a result, Frödin observed, the population of many districts had been reduced to a quarter of what it used to be. In the years 1936-1938, however, the deportees were allowed to return (Frödin, 1944, p. 5). The only author who speaks of genocide in

Genocide of Kurds

connection with the Turkish punitive measures before 1937, although in a very loose sense, is Kutschera (1979, pp. 89-90). However, the government objectives and the measures that he refers to are more appropriately termed *ethnocide*. It was the Kurdish identity that was to be eliminated, not necessarily large numbers of Kurdish individuals.

A stronger claim that actual genocide took place can be made for the pacification of Dersim, a particularly unruly part of Kurdistan, in two extremely bloody military campaigns in 1937 and 1938. The people of Dersim were culturally distinct from the other Kurds, and by their fierce independent-mindedness they had come to epitomize in the Turkish bureaucratic mind reactionary obstacles in the way of progress. Official discourse, analyzed by Beşikçi (1990), was openly and aggressively racist. The Turkish position was that these "primitives" and "bandits" should give way to modern civilization, just like the American Indians had. This should be effected by their assimilation to the supposedly superior Turkish culture and the physical elimination of those who resisted. An uprising in 1937, which was at least in part provoked by the first pacifying measures, provided the occasion for brutal military campaigns, in which thousands of noncombatants were killed and a large proportion of the villages destroyed and the crops burned. The British consul at Trabzon, who probably was the nearest European observer, compared the brutal and indiscriminate violence with the Armenian massacres of 1915. *"Thousands of Kurds,"* he reported, *"including women and children, were slain; others, mostly children, were thrown into the Euphrates; while thousands of others in less hostile areas, who had first been deprived of their cattle and other belongings, were deported to (provinces) in Central Anatolia."*<sup>2</sup>

The Kurdish nationalist, Nuri Dersimi, has left a graphic and detailed description of the massacres (Dersimi, 1952). Most later pro-Kurdish accounts lean heavily on this source. There is some independent confirmation based on local oral sources in a more recent book by a local political activist (Şivan, 1975). More recently yet, two persons of Dersim extraction have published novels in which the Dersim rebellion and massacres play a central part and which were clearly meant to present a Kurdish view of what had happened (Cem, 1990; Işık, 1990). These novels complement two earlier ones by the Turkish author, Barbaros Baykara, that were considerably less sympathetic to the Kurds (Baykara, 1974, 1975). The Turkish sociologist, Beşikçi, published an important study on the Dersim massacres and their background (Beşikçi, 1990). His description of the actual killings is largely based on Dersimi and Şivan, but he adds an analysis of Turkish official discourse (parliamentary and academic debates, high officials' reports on the area, military dispatches) to show that the massacres were not just an unfortunate accident. He accuses the Turkish government of genocide — a very courageous thing to do even now.

Most Turkish authors dealing with the events speak of resistance to modernization by reactionary tribal and feudal chieftains and mention their violent suppression by the Army, but neglect mentioning massacres. An early typical example is the book by the Uluğ (1939), a journalist who had earlier written a booklet on "feudalism" in Dersim. A whole series of prostate books on the Kurds and the Kurdish movement follow the same

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<sup>2</sup> Despatch from the British consul at Trabzon, dated 27 September 1938. Enclosed in Foreign Office files, series FO 371, document 1938: E5961/69/44 (Public Record Office, London). Italics by the present author.

line; Kurdish rebels represent the dark Middle Ages, the Turkish Army the Age of Enlightenment. This was also the tone of the reports in the contemporary Turkish press, which even showed pride in the amount of violence expended in the suppression of the rebellion. The most remarkable Turkish source, however, is the official military history of the campaigns (Hall,1972). This study has long been extremely hard to find, but a recent abbreviated reissue (Bulut,1991a) has made this essential source material more easily accessible. It is an enlightening work, both because it graphically illustrates how the Turkish elite viewed the Kurds and because it gives a very blunt account of how many villages were burned and how many "bandits and their dependents" were exterminated. The book was not written for the general public, and there is no attempt to hide the brutal violence against women and children as well as against armed insurgents.

Prior to the massacres, the population of Dersim was estimated at 65,000 to 70,000 for Dersim proper (Tunceli) or 150,000 for the wider area sharing the same basic culture ("larger Dersim"). The body count in the military history of the campaign — which is not very detailed and does not include the hundreds of women who in despair jumped to their deaths or the families that perished when the mountain caves into which they had fled were walled up — adds up to something between three and seven thousand. Dersimi gives figures that are several times higher, and later publications mention even higher numbers, such as 50,000 killed and 100,000 deported (Baran, 1989, p. 113; Felser, 1991, p. 45). If we stick to a conservative estimate, 5 to 10% of the Dersim population were killed, and the numbers deported must have been much higher (but no serious estimates have been published so far).

Dersim and persons of Dersimi extraction have continued to suffer discrimination. This may have contributed to the fact that both left-wing radicalism and Kurdish nationalism have found some of their strongest support bases precisely in Tunceli (the new name for Dersim proper). Incidental deportations of undesirable persons from Tunceli have regularly occurred; in the 1980s, the government announced new plans for large-scale resettlement, ostensibly on behalf of forest conservation. In 1988, it was reported that the population of Tunceli had declined from 200,000 to 162,000 during the previous decade (Laber and Whitman,1988, p. 39). Most of the Dersim population live dispersed through Turkey and western Europe, and not much of their traditional culture is alive anymore.

The policy of forced assimilation of the Kurds reached its apogee in the late 1930s. With the general political liberalization since 1945 it gradually relaxed, to be temporarily revived after the military interventions of 1961, 1971 and 1980. The 1982 Constitution and several newly enacted laws provided the legal framework for a new concerted effort to destroy Kurdish culture. One of these laws, banning the use of the Kurdish language, is discussed by Rumpf (1989); various other aspects of the destruction of ethnic identity are referred to by Laber and Whitman (1988). Both are brief and fragmentary analyses; there exists as yet no comprehensive treatment of this last effort at forced assimilation. The policy was a dismal failure and created a strong Kurdish nationalist reaction and growing popular support for a small violent party, the Workers' Party of Kurdistan (PKK), that carried out a guerrilla war against the state (see Bruinessen, 1988; Gunter, 1990; Imset,1992).

In early 1991, the Turkish government, under pressure from abroad, made an about-turn in Kurdish policy and recognized the existence of the Kurds, implicitly granting them cultural rights and allowing them a certain amount of political expression in Ankara and Istanbul. At the same time, repression in the Kurdish area increased. Death squads became active against prominent Kurdish personalities (Cowell, 1992; Amnesty International, 1991 and 1992). The PKK had meanwhile changed its tactics to *intifada*-type popular rebellions leading to violent military reaction and further polarization. The confrontation reached a climax in 1992 on March 21 (the Kurdish "national" holiday, *Newroz*), when the military shot at peaceful demonstrations in several towns, reportedly killing some 80 and wounding much larger numbers (Helsinki Watch, 1992). It seems likely that increasingly grave massacres will keep occurring in Turkish Kurdistan.

## DEPORTATIONS AND ASSIMILATION OF KURDS IN THE SOVIET UNION

When the Georgian, Armenian and Azerbaijani republics joined the Soviet Union (1920-21), there were Kurdish villages scattered across all three republics. One district in western (Soviet) Azerbaijan, around the city of Lachin (lying between Nagorno Karabakh and the Armenian Republic), was almost entirely Kurdish, elsewhere they constituted small minorities. For a brief period, the Lachin district was made an autonomous region within the Republic of Azerbaijan. During the first years of the Union, Kurdish culture was allowed free expression and experienced a revival. Under Stalin, however, the autonomous region was abolished, Kurdish culture was suppressed and there was strong pressure on the Kurds to assimilate to Russian or other acceptable cultures. At one point, allegedly even the word "Kurd" was banned.

In the 1930s and 1940s, the Kurds, like a dozen other nationalities, suffered mass deportations. What precisely happened has long remained hidden, but due to *glasnost* some information is at last becoming available. Nadir K. Nadirov, a Kurdish member of the Kazakhstan Academy of Sciences (who as a child was deported himself) has recently gone public with accounts of the deportations (Laber, 1990; Nadirov, 1992). In 1937, Azerbaijan expelled large numbers of Kurds to Armenia, and in 1944, many of the Kurds of Georgia were deported to Central Asia.<sup>3</sup> Entire towns and villages were deported, the men first, and later the women and children. The communities were apparently broken up and dispersed over the Central Asian republics (Kazakhstan, Kirghizia, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan) as well as Siberia. It is claimed that as many as half of them died on the way (Laber, 1990). Unlike other ethnic groups, the deported Kurds were not allowed to return to their original homes after 1957.

According to the official Soviet censuses, the numbers of Kurds in the Republic of Azerbaijan decreased from 41,000 to 6,000 between 1926 and 1939, and in 1959 only 1,500 Kurds were reported there (Vanly, 1992, p. 204). It is not possible to say how much of this decrease is due to deportations and how much to assimilation or deliberate under-reporting. Soviet Kurds claim that even the most recent census seriously under-

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<sup>3</sup> These deportations have gone almost unnoticed. They are not even mentioned in Robert Conquest's (1970) well-known study, which deals in detail with the fate of other Transcaucasian peoples.

reports their number; the official figure is 153,000 for all republics together, but Kurdish claims are at least three times that high (Laber, 1990; Vanly, 1992, p. 208).

The resurgence of nationalism in the former Soviet republics has resulted in a new wave of expulsions of Kurds. In 1987, ethnic rioting caused many Kurds to flee Kirghizia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Most of them appear to have moved to Transcaucasia, to the Krasnodar area. Not much later, large numbers of Muslim Kurds (allegedly 18,000) were forced to leave Armenia.<sup>4</sup> They also sought recourse in Krasnodar, some of them later moving on to Azarbaijan. At the same time, Kurds from Azarbaijan were reported fleeing towards Armenia (Vanly, 1992, p. 207-208).

### **CHEMICAL WARFARE, MASS KILLINGS, AND WHOLESAL DESTRUCTION IN IRAQI KURDISTAN**

In Iraq, guerrilla warfare between Kurdish nationalist organizations and the central government has been going on since 1961 with but few and brief interruptions. In the course of the conflict, the Iraqi Kurds have established close ties with the successive Iranian regimes. This provided the various Iraqi regimes with legitimation for violent measures that often went well beyond the mere suppression of rebellion and dissent. Cruel torture and summary executions have been the hallmark of the Iraqi Ba'ath regime, which has been in power in Baghdad since 1968. The bombing of civilian targets and other reprisals against innocent civilians (such as the arrest and execution of children in the town of Sulaimaniya in 1985) have been standard practice. Saddam Hussein's climb to the position of sole leader (completed in 1979) was marked by an increase in the overall level of violence (al-Khalil, 1989). Guerrilla warfare and army repression together resulted in a large flow of refugees into Iran (peaking in 1975, after the Shah had given up his support of the Iraqi Kurds in exchange for border concessions). Large parts of Iraqi Kurdistan along the state borders were deliberately laid waste, tens of thousands of villagers deported and large but still unknown numbers disappeared. Still, until the 1980s it may not be possible to speak of genocide in a strict formal definition. The Kurds may have suffered more altogether, but Arab citizens were treated with equal cruelty.

Things changed during the Iraq-Iran war (1980-88). A first important case to be mentioned is the disappearance of the Barzani Kurds. The Barzan "tribe" constitutes a culturally distinct group among the north Iraqi Kurds, which had long formed the core of the Kurdish movement. Mulla Mustafa Barzani (who died in 1979) was the legendary national leader of the Iraqi Kurds. About half of them had lived as refugees in Iran since 1975, the other half had surrendered to the Iraqi army and had been resettled in camps near Arbil, far from their tribal area. The villages of the Barzan area itself were razed. In August 1983, all men aged between 8 and 70 of this group, eight thousand in total, were rounded up in the camps and driven off in army lorries. None of them have been seen again. According to information confidentially leaked by Iraqi military sources, at least

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<sup>4</sup> A considerable proportion of the Kurds in Armenia are not Muslims but Yezidis, adherents of an Iranian religion that only survives among the Kurds. When the conflict between Christian Armenia and Muslim Azarbaijan turned violent, Muslim Kurds became targets of violent aggression, but the Yezidis apparently were left unharmed.

some of them were used in experiments with chemical arms; there is little hope that any of them are still alive (Zibari, 1989). The women and children remaining behind were subjected to cruel mistreatment and humiliation, apparently including systematic rape (Makiya, 1993, pp. 161-2). The abduction of the Barzanis apparently was a reprisal for the capture, a month earlier, of a strategic border post by the Iranian army, possibly aided by Iran-based Iraqi Kurds loyal to Barzani's sons. If it is true that all or many of them were killed, this constitutes an unambiguous case of genocide by the terms of the 1948 definition in the United Nations Convention on Genocide.

*The Iraqi regime was probably the first government ever to use chemical weapons against its own citizens.* In March 1988, in an apparent reprisal for its capture by Iranian military assisted by Kurdish guerrillas, the Kurdish town of Halabja, near the Iranian border, was bombed with chemical warheads. A large number of civilians were killed — 5,000 according to the most widely accepted estimate, and at least 3,200, for so many of them are known by name. Iraq had used chemical weapons before, both against the Iranian army and against its own Kurdish villages, but this was the first attack that drew world-wide attention, because foreign journalists were able to film and photograph the victims. It was only after Halabja that Kurdish reports of the earlier gas attacks were taken seriously. The first attacks, in April 1987, were against villages in or near guerrilla-held territory. Kurdish sources claimed three hundred dead. These attacks appear to have been experimental. The first chemical bombing was recorded on video. Surviving villagers who reached Erbil were not allowed treatment but were taken to an army hospital for observation; from there they disappeared and were not seen again. More gas attacks were reported in May, June and September 1987 (Kurdish Program, 1988, p. 4; Middle East Watch, 1990, p. 83; Makiya, 1993, pp. 164-5; Middle East Watch, 1993, pp. 59-73, 360)

*Although the Halabja massacre created an outcry internationally, there was a surprising lack of international pressure on Iraq, and no sanctions.* The Iraq-Iran war was still continuing and the Reagan administration in the U.S.A. strongly "tilted" towards Iraq. Appropriate pressure might conceivably have dissuaded Iraq from further use of chemical weapons against the Kurds. As it was, Iraq used war gases again on a wide scale between February and September 1988, in anti-Kurdish military campaigns of unprecedented brutality that were given the ominous code-name of *Anfal* ("Spoils"). Only the last of these offensives, which took place in August 1988, after Iraq had signed a cease-fire with Iran, received international attention at the time.

The attacks this time were concentrated in the Zakho-Duhok-Amadiya triangle near the Turkish border, a zone that had to some extent been under Kurdish guerrilla control. Kurdish sources claimed that 77 villages were bombed with chemical warheads and some 3,000 people killed. Most of the survivors fled in panic towards the Turkish border; some 65,000 crossed it in time before the Iraqi army blocked their way. Interviews with the eyewitnesses among these refugees are our chief source for these events. The major report based on such interviews was until recently that by U.S. Senate aides Galbraith and Van Hollen ( 1988); see also those by Tuşalp ( 1989), Middle East Watch (1990, pp. 75-85), and Saeedpour (1992). Important new testimonial and documentary evidence is presented in Middle East Watch, 1990, pp. 261-281. Initially, some observers refused to believe, in spite of the consistent testimonies of Kurdish



eyewitnesses, that Iraq had actually used chemical weapons in this August offensive (Viorst, 1988). The testimonial evidence, however, is supported by the chemical analysis of various samples taken inside Iraq (Hay and Roberts, 1990; Middle East Watch and Physicians for Human Rights, 1993).

The use of poison gas against the Kurds is closely associated with the name of Ali Hassan al-Majid, a cousin of Saddam Hussein who was put in charge of northern Iraq, with unlimited powers, in March 1987. Al-Majid apparently saw it as his task to achieve a "final solution" to Iraq's Kurdish problem. Chemical arms constituted only one element in his approach, perhaps used chiefly for their psychological effect. Mass deportations and mass killings, and overall violence of unprecedented brutality even by Iraqi standards characterized al-Majid's tour of duty. The *cordon sanitaire* along the Iranian and Turkish borders was extended to a 30 kilometer wide security zone in which all villages and towns were razed to the ground, fruit trees cut and water-wells filled up with concrete.

The brutal series of *Anfal* offensives, beginning in February 1988, had the overt dual objective of destroying the Kurdish guerrilla resistance and of forcing the villagers out of settlements in the "security zone." In the process, numerous villages much further inland were destroyed as well. The inhabitants were driven off to camps in other parts of the country. What happened to them then remained for several years a well-kept secret. Many perished on the way; evidence that has come to light since 1991 indicates that many, many more were summarily executed and buried in mass graves.

The *Anfal* offensives, it is becoming increasingly clear, were not just ruthless campaigns to subdue pockets of guerrilla resistance and to remove the population on whom these depended. Secret official Iraqi documents captured by the Kurds during the March 1991 uprising contain explicit instructions, issued by al-Majid in June 1987 and remaining in force throughout that and the following year, to kill all adults arrested in the "security zone" (Middle East Watch, 1993, pp. 79-84). This concerned well over 1,000 inhabited villages, and the indications are that these instructions were carried out to the letter. In the words of the first author to see part of the said documents and to interview eyewitnesses, the *Anfal* involved the "bureaucratically organized, routinely administered mass killing of villagers for no reason other than that they happened to live in an area suddenly designated 'prohibited for security reasons' (Makiya, 1992, p. 58).

Among the official documents seized by the Kurds is an audio recording of a meeting between Ali Hassan al-Majid and other high functionaries in January 1989. Al-Majid can be heard to boast how he took care of all those Kurds from the destroyed villages. *"Taking care of them means burying them with bulldozers. That's what taking care of them means... These people gave themselves up. Does that mean that I am going to leave them alive? Where shall I put these people, so many of them? So I began to distribute them across the provinces. And from there I had bulldozers going backward and forward"* (Makiya, 1992, p. 58; longer extracts of this recording, in a different translation, are given in Middle East Watch, 1993, pp. 351-2). This was not an empty boast. It was confirmed by one young boy who survived a mass execution of deportees, near the Saudi border. The people in his convoy, women and children, were driven into deep, bulldozer-dug pits and shot in the head (Middle East Watch and Physicians for

Human Rights, 1992, pp. 23-25; Makiya, 1992, pp. 60-61). There are at least seven other survivors of mass executions. Their stories, highly consistent with each other, are told in the Middle East Watch report (1993, pp. 239-258, 326- 333).

From their and other testimonies, confirmed by documentary evidence, planned and systematic mass murder can be reconstructed. The "*Anfal* villagers" — those who were not killed in the offensives and did not succeed in fleeing — were taken to collection points, where women and children were separated from the men. After interrogation and a rough screening procedure, the men were put into closed vehicles and driven to various destinations in the south of Iraq, where mass graves had already been dug for them. Women and children from certain districts were also executed, others were sent to prisons or prison camps and ultimately ended up in one of several "housing complexes" where displaced villagers were supposed to live and build their own houses, without any facilities provided.

The Kurdish parties, based on a rough count of evacuated villages, claim that 182,000 noncombatants disappeared in the process, and they fear that all were killed. Makiya estimates that "at least 100,000 noncombatant Kurds" were killed in the 1988 *Anfal* offensives (ibid., p. 61) and refers to a meeting in 1991 where al-Majid was heard to mention the same number. The most recent, painstakingly documented report by Middle East Watch concludes that the number killed in mass executions cannot have been less than 50,000 and may be twice that number (1993, p. 345). Over 1,200 villages were razed in the *Anfal* offensives alone, bringing the total of villages destroyed since 1968 to 4,000 out of an estimated 7,000 Kurdish villages, i.e., more than half (see the lists compiled in Rasool, 1990 and Resool, 1990).

After the final *Anfal* offensive, Iraq declared a general amnesty for the Kurds and invited refugees back. Mass executions, however, continued for some time, new arrests were made, further villages razed. Returning refugees and other survivors were resettled in "housing complexes." Members of the Christian and Yezidi religious minorities, however, were separated from among the Muslim Kurds and taken to an unknown destination. They have not been seen or heard of again (Middle East Watch, 1993, pp. 312-318).

There were new Kurdish massacres in the wake of operation "Desert Storm," the American-led international offensive that expelled the Iraqi occupying troops from Kuwait in February 1991. President Bush called upon the people of Iraq to overthrow Saddam Hussein; the Shiites in the south and the Kurds in the north rose up in spontaneous, badly prepared rebellions. Much more of the Iraqi armed forces had remained intact than was believed, and elite troops quelled both rebellions in blood. The Kurdish rebellion was far more massive than all previous ones; virtually the entire population took part, and all towns were in rebel hands. In late March the army attacked, with tanks and helicopter gunships, wreaking death and destruction and sending up to two million people to flight. As they tried to reach the Turkish or Iranian borders, many of these refugees were killed by Iraqi fire; many others died of fatigue, cold and hunger. The total number of Kurdish deaths in these few weeks has been estimated at 25,000 to 30,000 (Makiya, 1993, p. 203, citing the *Journal of American Medicine*, vol. 266, no. 5, August 7, 1991, p. 639). It is likely, incidentally, that the

number of casualties among the Shiites in the south was even higher, but no reliable estimates are known.

## **CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS FOR IMPROVING OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE MASSACRES**

Much of our information on the Kurdish massacres in Turkey in the 1920s and 1930s, and to a lesser extent that on the events in Iraq in the 1980s, derives from highly partisan sources. One is torn between sympathy and respect for victims' reports and the need for further corroborating information. There have been few if any independent eyewitnesses and few independent researchers working on more objective assessments of the evidence. The governments concerned are obviously not at all supportive of such research, preferring to have their official versions of the events canonized.

Language problems constitute another barrier; a researcher working on any of the cases mentioned above will have to have a command of Turkish or Arabic to read official communications as well as important secondary sources, and preferably of several Kurdish dialects if he or she wishes to make interviews. Galbraith and Van Hollen (1988) and Van der Stoel (1992) have shown, however, that one can produce a good report just working with translators. Nevertheless, much relevant information will only be retrieved by one who has access to written material in Middle Eastern languages. Important relevant written material has recently become available in both Turkey and Iraq.

### **Turkey**

The political liberalization of the late 1980s and early 1990s in Turkey has for the first time made the Kurdish problem publicly debatable. Censorship has been considerably relaxed, so that older books on the Kurds could be reissued. An important event was the publication of Beşikçi's (1990) study of the Dersim massacres. It was almost immediately banned, but those really interested, both in Turkey and abroad, will not find it hard to get access to a copy. Two other relevant books, long hard to find, were recently reissued: (Dersimi, 1952; Bulut, 1991a, which is a reissue of Hallı, 1972). Some relevant materials from various Turkish archives have incidentally found their way to Kurdish intellectual circles. Parts of this material have been published in various Kurdish journals appearing in Europe during the 1980s (see also Bulut, 1991b). It is likely that more is to follow if the relatively liberal political climate in Turkey continues.

One would, of course, wish to see all relevant Turkish archives opened to independent investigators. The official history of the suppression of rebellions (Hallı, 1972) and the documents that were leaked so far suggest that there is a vast store of material to be uncovered: military reports and dispatches, correspondence between the coordinating governor and locallevel officials, instructions for deportation and records of its implementation, population statistics. A political decision at the highest level will be necessary to make even part of this material accessible; but one would hope that the possibility of such a decision is not so unrealistic now as it would have been only a decade ago.

Another approach that may now be taken is the systematic interviewing of survivors. For a long time this was virtually impossible for political reasons; people did not dare to speak out for fear of reprisals. The liberal wind blowing in Istanbul and Ankara has not yet reached Tunceli, where it is important to realize a reign of severe repression continues, but many of the survivors live elsewhere in Turkey now, or even in western Europe. Systematic interviewing has to be done before long, since the adolescents of 1937-38 are now in their seventies, and soon there will be no one alive who remembers. Some young intellectuals have in fact already been conducting such interviews, and Şilan (1990-92) used them in a new account of the Dersim rebellion published in a Kurdish magazine.

## **Iraq**

A large part of Iraqi Kurdistan is at present withdrawn from central government surveillance. Under the protective umbrella of the American airforce, the Kurdish parties exercise control of the area. This has made it possible to compile lists of the disappeared and to systematically record oral testimony on the killings and other abuses. The economic situation of the area is so catastrophic that most Kurds have, understandably, other priorities. Nevertheless, a few Kurds, among whom the name of Shorsh Rasool stands out, have started doing this, and their research lies at the base of the first published accounts of the *Anfal* (Makiya, 1992, 1993; Middle East Watch and Physicians for Human Rights, 1992, 1993). Middle East Watch took the important step of sending a research team to Iraqi Kurdistan, that spent a total of six months there in 1992 and 1993, interviewing some 350 eyewitnesses. The testimonial evidence compiled so far makes a convincing reconstruction of the Kurdish genocide possible (Middle East Watch, 1993). Many things, however, still remain obscure, and the effort to systematically interview survivors should be continued.

The study of genocide in Saddam Hussein's Iraq will be facilitated by the regime's somewhat astonishing penchant for documentation of its own terror. During the popular rising of March 1991, the Kurdish organizations captured vast amounts of Iraqi secret police archives and other official documents. The collection contains a wide variety of documents, including video recordings of interrogation and torture, tape recordings of important meetings, military communications concerning the *Anfal* campaigns, informers' and spies' reports, intelligence files on hundreds of thousands of persons and, most importantly, the paperwork of Iraq's bureaucracy of terror. These documents will probably make a detailed reconstruction of the *Anfal* and the mass executions possible and give an insight in who were responsible for which acts. The first person to be shown some of these documents, to realize their importance, and to write about them was Makiya (1992). Fourteen tons of these documents have now been shipped to the United States, where they are being analyzed under the supervision of Middle East Watch. A significant part of the evidence presented by this organization in its important report on the Iraqi Kurdish genocide (1993) is based on these documents, although so far only a small fraction has been systematically analyzed. Further important findings are likely to surface as the analysis continues.

Middle East Watch also cooperated with an other organization, Physicians for Human Rights, in carrying out a number of forensic investigations in Iraqi Kurdistan

(1992,1993). Careful exhumations of reported mass graves and chemical analysis of soil and other samples have corroborated testimonial evidence on mass executions and chemical attacks. The most important work of this kind will have to wait until the other parts of Iraq are open to investigation. The *Anfal* villagers were taken to the deep south of Iraq, close to the Saudi border, to be killed. There must lie, hidden in the desert sand, mass graves holding between 50,000 and 100,000 bodies from the 1988 killings alone. Other mass graves, of earlier series of killings, may also be recovered.

The full story of the genocide will probably only be known when the archives of Baghdad can be investigated. The amount and quality of the documentation of massive human rights abuses that is already available to independent investigators, however, is virtually unprecedented. The Iraqi Kurdish massacres have thus become one of the best documented cases of genocide since the Holocaust. It is likely that a strong case can be made against the Iraqi regime on the basis of evidence contained in its own documents. The urgent question is, what to do next? Can the perpetrators be brought to trial (or should they be tried in absentia)? Which states would be willing to lodge a formal complaint against Iraq? Which court should adjudicate such a trial, or should a special court be set up as in Nuremberg? Are official Iraqi documents, acquired and exported without authorization, admissible as evidence in court? The political balance in the United Nations is at present against Iraq, making an international trial at least conceivable. Many states will, however, be hesitant to become actively involved for fear of creating a precedent. *It is precisely this possibility of establishing a precedent that makes the Kurdish case all the more important for those of us who are committed to human rights.*

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Reconstruction and analysis of the Dersim massacres and of Iraq's use of chemical arms against the Kurds in the late eighties. The available evidence is surveyed, and the events placed into the context of the states' overall policies towards the Kurds.

Felser, Gerd (1991). Die Kurden in diesem Jahrhundert: Leid und Verfolgung. In Zülch, Tilman (Ed.), *Völkermord an den Kurden. Eine Dokumentation der Gesellschaft für Bedrohte Völker*. Frankfurt am Main: Luchterhand, pp. 41-59.

A survey of massacres of Kurds during this century. Sympathy for the Kurdish cause is expressed in high estimates of numbers of victims and what appears to this author an overly uncritical repetition of Kurdish claims. Around 50,000 Kurds are said to have been murdered in the Dersim campaigns of 1937 and 1938 (p. 45); the Iraqi airforce is said in 1969 to have bombed Kurdish villages with napalm (pp. 47-49). The Iraqi regime is accused of having killed, between 1968 and 1990, 200,000 Kurds and 20,000 Assyrian Christians, most of them civilians; of having systematically destroyed 5,000 villages and deported 1.5 to 2 million people; of killing 13,000 Kurds and 2,000 Assyrian Christians with poison gas (p. 56).

Jwaideh, Wadie (1960). *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement: Its Origins and Development*. Ph.D. Dissertation Syracuse University. 895 pp.

The best study of the early phases of the Kurdish national movement. Its discussion of the rebellions in Turkey (pp. 593-634) is based on published sources only but is judicious in its evaluation. The punitive measures by the government are mentioned in passing but not specially analyzed. The author mentions deportations, mass arrests and summary executions and cautiously refers to the high estimates given by contemporary Kurdish nationalist sources, alongside a few much lower estimates found in the European press.

Kutschera, Chris (1979). *Le mouvement national kurde*. Paris: Flammarion. 393 pp.

One of the best studies of the Kurdish national movement, especially good on the Iraqi Kurdish movement from 1961 to 1975. The author has frequently visited Kurdistan as a journalist and consulted French and British archives besides published accounts for the earlier period. In discussing the Turkish repression following the first great Kurdish rebellion, the author speaks of "genocide" (pp. 89-90) describing the prelude to the Dersim rebellion he mentions mass deportations and plans for "dekurdification" of the region (pp.104-105,120-122).

McDowall, David (1992). *The Kurds: A Nation Denied*. London: Minority Rights Publications. 150 pp.

The most recent general survey of the situation of the Kurds in the various countries where they live. Briefly discusses the use of chemical weapons in Iraq in 1987-88 and the exodus of spring 1991 (based on secondary sources). Poses, and answers in the positive, the question of genocide.

Rambout, Lucien (1947). *Les Kurdes et le droit: Des textes, des faits*. Paris: Editions du Cerf. 160 pp.

A strongly pro-Kurdish overview of the situation of the Kurds under the various governments of Iran, Turkey and Iraq, written under pseudonym by Father Thomas Bois, a well-known authority on Kurdish culture. Uncritically repeats inflated Kurdish claims of numbers killed, etc., but is

useful in identifying cases of deliberate mass killing, and contains some material not easily found elsewhere.

Zülch, Tilman (Ed.) (1991). *Völkermord an den Kurden. Eine Dokumentation der Gesellschaft für Bedrohte Völker*. Frankfurt am Main: Luchterhand. 135 pp.

Contains a compilation of press reports on the Kurdish rebellion and mass flight of spring 1991, with interviews with refugees (pp. 13-27) followed by a survey of earlier massacres of Kurds in the present century (see Felser, 1991) and a discussion of the repression of the Kurds under Ba'ath rule in Iraq. Other chapters deal with the treatment of the Kurds in Syria, Iran and contemporary Turkey.

## **The Kurds in Turkey**

### DESTRUCTION OF KURDISH ETHNIC IDENTITY

Baran, Ute (1989). Deportations: Tunceli Kanunlari. In *Documentation of the International Conference on Human Rights in Kurdistan, 14-16. April 1989, Hochschule Bremen*. Bremen: The Initiative for Human Rights in Kurdistan, pp. 110-115.

Discusses Turkey's 1934 law on resettlement and its implementation, as well as deportations of Kurds as recently as 1986. Unsystematic and marred by mistranslations and other minor factual mistakes.

Bedr Khan, Emir Sureya (1927). *The Case of Kurdistan against Turkey*. Philadelphia: Kurdish Independence League (Hoyboon). 76 pp.

An angry indictment of the Turkish policy vis-à-vis the Kurds by a leading Kurdish nationalist. Claims that following the first great rebellion one million Kurds were murdered or deported. Three years later the same author, writing under the pseudonym of Dr. Bletch Chirguh, gave lower but more detailed figures.

Beşikçi, İsmail (1977), *Kürtlerin 'Mecburi İskan'ı* (The 'Forced Resettlement' of the Kurds). In Turkish. Ankara: Komal. 205 pp. [reprint Istanbul: Yurt Kitap-Yayın, 1992]

Beşikçi is a Turkish sociologist specializing in Kurdish studies who has devoted his life, at great personal cost, to the critical analysis and refutation of the official Turkish ideology and the documentation of the treatment of the Kurds. Most of his books, including this one, have been banned in Turkey, and he spent well over a decade in prison for his writings. The present book analyzes the 1934 law on forced resettlement which arranged for deportation of Kurds from large parts of Kurdistan and the settlement of Turkish-speaking groups in their stead. The author argues convincingly that the objective of the law was the destruction of Kurdish cultural identity.

Chirguh, Bletch (1930). *La question kurde, ses origines et ses causes*. Le Caire: Paul Barbey. 56 pp.

Another indictment of Turkey's Kurdish policies by leading nationalist Süreya Bedr Khan, this time writing under a pseudonym. Gives a proud account of the Kurdish struggle for independence and a gloomy picture of Turkish repression. Mentions hundreds of villages destroyed by Turkish troops, thousands of houses burned down and over 15,000 unarmed men, women and children killed and presents tables with a regional breakdown of these figures. Claims that between 1925 and 1928 over 500,000 Kurds were deported and that 200,000 of them died or were killed in the process.

Frödin, Johan (1944). Neuere Kulturgeografische Wandlungen in der östlichen Türkei. *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für Erdkunde*, 79(1-2), 1-20.

The Norwegian geographer, Frödin, visited eastern Turkey in 1936 and 1939 and reports on recent changes in the cultural and demographic landscape. Not only have the Armenians disappeared,

Frödin found Kurdish districts depopulated too, while many recent Turkish settlements had arisen. He attributes the depopulation to the bloody suppression of the Kurdish rebellions, especially that of 1930. The Turkish army killed tens of thousands, Frödin reports, and large parts of the surviving population were sent into concentration camps in Turkey's western provinces.

Hoyboun, Ligue Nationale Kurde (1928). *Les massacres kurdes en Turquie*. Le Caire: Paul Barbey. 41 pp.

Attempts to prove the existence, at least since the 1910s, of Turkish plans for destroying the Kurds as a nation by mass deportations and assimilation or extermination, on the model of the Armenian massacres. Mentions various cases of deportations and mass executions but is otherwise poorly documented. The only documentation concerns the trials of participants in the 1925 rebellion.

Kendal (1978). Le Kurdistan de Turquie. In Chaliand, Gérard (Ed.) *Les Kurdes et le Kurdistan. La question nationale kurde au Proche-Orient*. Paris: Maspéro pp. 69-153. [English translation: Kurdistan in Turkey. In Chaliand, Gérard (Ed.), *People Without a Country*. London: Zed Books 1982, pp. 47-106].

History of the relationship between the Kurds and the state in Republican Turkey by a leading Kurdish intellectual. Pays considerable attention to the rebellions and their suppression and to the policy of forced assimilation. No extravagant claims, well referenced.

Laber, Jeri, and Whitman, Lois (1988). *Destroying Ethnic Identity: The Kurds of Turkey. An Update*. New York: Helsinki Watch. 73 pp.

A human rights report containing much anecdotal material but no systematic analysis of the attempted destruction of Kurdish ethnic identity in Turkey. Besides much on torture of Kurdish political prisoners, the guerrilla activities of the PKK and the government reprisals, the booklet also reports on forced migration from Tunceli province, whose population declined from 200,000 to 162,000 in a decade, while elsewhere high growth rates were registered.

Rumpf, Christian (1989). The Turkish law prohibiting languages other than Turkish. In *Documentation of the International Conference on Human Rights in Kurdistan, 14-16 April 1989, Hochschule Bremen*. Bremen: The Initiative for Human Rights in Kurdistan, pp. 68-89.

Analysis of a law issued in 1983 that banned the use of the Kurdish language (and thereby was a means towards forced assimilation). The constitutional and legal context of the law is discussed, and it is argued that the law contravenes international treaties to which Turkey is a party. Debate on the law in Turkey is briefly summarized.

Saydam, Abubekir; Kesen, Nebi; and Kranefeld-Wied, Paul (Eds.) (1991). *Kurdistan zwischen Aufstand und Völkermord: Fakten - Hintergründe - Analysen*. Frankfurt am Main: Medico International, and Köln: KOMKAR. 155 pp.

In spite of the title, none of the articles in this book explicitly addresses the question of genocide. All authors deal primarily with Turkish Kurdistan (KOMKAR is an association of Kurdish immigrant workers from Turkey). The first contribution (by Nebi Kesen) discusses forced deportations in Turkish Kurdistan since 1989 claiming that these concerned 100,000 people. Out of 37 villages in the district of Şırnak, 28 are said to have been destroyed. A detailed report on the deportations, prepared by Medico International, is appended (pp. 135-140). Another contribution (by Petra Wurzel, pp. 47-53) deals with the ban on the Kurdish language and its partial lifting.

## THE DERSIM MASSACRES

Baykara, Barbaros (1974). *Dersim 1937*. In Turkish. Istanbul: Akyar. 289 pp.

Baykara, Barbaros (1975). *Tunceli 1938*. In Turkish. Istanbul: Akyar. 247 pp.

Genocide of Kurds



Two-volume "documentary novel" on the Dersim rebellion based on contemporary Turkish newspaper reports, and reflecting the official Turkish view of the events. Paints an unflattering picture of Dersim society as pervaded with criminal violence but also mentions excesses of violence by Turkish troops.

Beşikçi, İsmail (1990). *Tunceli Kanunu (1935) ve Dersim Jenosidi* (The 1935 law regarding Tunceli and the genocide of Dersim). In Turkish. İstanbul: Belge Yayınları. 185 pp.

In this book the author analyzes the massacres of Dersim in 1937-1938 and the government measures that constituted the prelude thereto. Central place is given to a law on the pacification and "reform" of this Kurdish district. The parliamentary debates on this law are analyzed to establish the perceptions and attitudes of the Ankara political elite regarding the Kurds. The official motivations of the law (pacification, suppression of banditry, development) are juxtaposed with documents that could be construed to indicate an intent to wipe out a considerable part of the population. In Beşikçi's view, the law served to legitimate genocide. This book like the author's earlier work, brings much of the Turkish Kemalist discourse of the 1930's, with its barely hidden racism, back to the surface and documents the intent to destroy Kurdish ethnic identity. The description of the actual massacres depends on Kurdish sources (Dersimi, 1952; Şivan, 1975) and the official Turkish military history of the campaign (Hallı, 1972).

Bulut, Faik (Ed.) (1991a). *Devletin Gözüyle Türkiye'de Kürt İsyanları* (The Kurdish rebellions in Turkey from the viewpoint of the state). In Turkish. İstanbul: Yön. 319 pp. [Abbreviated reissue of Hallı, 1972, with additional documents]

Bulut, Faik (Ed.) (1991b). *Belgelerle Dersim Raporları* (Reports on Dersim in documents). In Turkish. İstanbul: Yön. 336 pp.

A collection of official letters and reports from the 1930's concerning Dersim, including lists of tribes and population statistics of individual villages.

Cem, Munzur (1990). *Gülümse ey Dersim* (Smile, o Dersim). In Turkish. Köln: Özgürlük Yolu Yayınları. 356 pp.

Novel set at the time of the Dersim rebellion. The author is from Dersim himself and interviewed many eyewitnesses before writing this novel.

Dersimi, Vet. Dr. M. Nuri (1952). *Kürdistan Tarihinde Dersim* (Dersim in the history of Kurdistan). In Turkish. Aleppo: privately printed. 341 pp. [Various recent reissues: İstanbul: Eylem Yayınları, 1979 (as *Dersim Tarihi*); Köln: KOMKAR, 1991; Diyarbakır: Dilan Yayınları, 1992.]

Dersimi was a Kurdish nationalist active in the Dersim area during the years preceding the 1937-38 massacres. He fled to Syria not long before the military operations started but remained in regular contact with the area. His book gives the most detailed account available of the massacres and appears on the whole reliable, although the numbers of victims mentioned may be inflated. Dersimi claims that the Turkish air force in 1938 bombed the district with poisonous gas (p. 319), a claim later often repeated by Kurdish nationalist authors but not confirmed by any other source. The discussion of the massacres is preceded by a useful sociological overview of the tribal situation and a history of the region.

Hallı, Reşat (1972). *Türkiye Cumhuriyetinde Ayaklanmalar (1924-1938)* (Rebellions in the Republic of Turkey, 1924-1938). In Turkish. Ankara: T.C. Genelkurmay Başkanlığı Harp Tarihi Dairesi. [Reissued in abbreviated form in Bulut, 1991a.]

The official military history of the Kurdish and other rebellions, prepared by the War History Office of the Turkish General Staff, and based upon the Army's archives. It was printed in a very limited edition for restricted circulation, and even those few copies were withdrawn almost immediately

upon publication. The recent reissue has at last made this highly important material generally available. This voluminous study gives very detailed accounts of the military operations against rebel movements. With bureaucratic precision, numbers of rebels (and their dependents) killed or captured are listed day by day, and villages destroyed and burned down are proudly enumerated. Relevant government memoranda and reports are also quoted.

Işık, Haydar (1990). *Dersimli Memik Ağa* (Memik Agha of Dersim). In Turkish. Istanbul: Belge Yayınları.

A novel set at the time of the Dersim rebellion and the Turkish punitive campaigns. The author is from Dersim himself, and the narrative of the large events is clearly based on local oral history.

Pamukçu, Ebubekir (1992). *Dersim Zaza Ayaklanmasının Tarihsel Kökenleri* (Historical roots of the uprising of the Zazas of Dersim). In Turkish. Istanbul: Yön. 142 pp.

A study of the backgrounds of the Dersim rebellion of 1937 that emphasizes the distinct ethnic character of Dersim. (Most tribes there do not speak Kurdish proper but a related language called Zaza or Kirmançki; the author is a spokesman for a nascent Zaza nationalism).

Şilan, B. (1990-92). *Değişik Yönleriyle Dersim Ayaklanması* (Various aspects of the Dersim Rebellion). In Turkish. *Deng* 1(3), pp. 22-31; 1(4), pp. 33-39; 3(20), pp. 26-36.

Description of the Dersim rebellion and its suppression, based largely on interviews with survivors besides the standard written accounts. *Deng* is a Kurdish political and cultural monthly published in Istanbul since 1990.

Şimşir, Bilal N. (1975). *İngiliz Belgeleriyle Türkiye'de 'Kürt Sorunu'* (1924-1938) (The 'Kurdish Question' in Turkey, According to British Documents, 1924-1938). Ankara: Dışişleri Bakanlığı.

Straightforward publication of documents from the Public Records Office concerning the Kurdish rebellions in Turkey. Contains comments by British diplomats on the massacres and deportations, but is not exhaustive.

Şivan, Dr. (1975). *Kürt Millet Hareketleri ve Irak'ta Kürdistan İhtilalı* (Kurdish national uprisings and the revolution of Kurdistan in Iraq). In Turkish. Stockholm: privately printed. [First published clandestinely in Turkey in 1970].

A history of the Kurdish movement. The author, whose real name was Sait Kırmızıtoprak, was the chairman of the Democratic Party of Kurdistan in Turkey and wrote this book when living in exile under the protection of the Iraqi sister party, so that his information on Iraq in the late 1960s is first-hand. He was born in Dersim, and the section on the Dersim massacres of 1937 and 1938, apparently based on oral sources, constitutes one of the very few written Kurdish testimonies on the events.

Uluğ, Naşit Hakkı (1939). *Tunceli Medeniyete Açılıyor* (Tunceli is opened up for civilization). In Turkish. Istanbul: Cumhuriyet Matbaası.

Jubilant account, by a committed Kemalist politician (member of parliament for Kütahya in western Turkey), of the progress brought to previously backward Tunceli (the new name for Dersim), thanks to the civilizing mission of the Turkish Army. There is not a word about massacres. This book is important for understanding the mentality of Turkey's ruling circles of the time.

## COUNTERINSURGENCY, DEATH SQUADS AND INDISCRIMINATE KILLINGS OF CIVILIANS IN THE 1990'S

Amnesty International (1991). *Southeast Turkey: Attacks on Human Rights Activists and Killings of Local Politicians*. AI Index: EUR 44/114/91. London: Amnesty International, International Secretariat.

The year 1991 saw the beginning of a wave of death squad-type killings of Kurdish politicians and human rights activists, the first of which are documented in this report.

Amnesty International (1992). *Turkey: Torture, Extrajudicial Executions, "Disappearances"*. AI Index: EUR 44/39/92. London: Amnesty International, International Secretariat. 32 pp.

Describes new legislation in Turkey under which "prisoners of conscience" were released and death sentences commuted, the continuation of systematic torture and the alarming rise in killings of prominent Kurds in Eastern Turkey by what appear to be death squads linked with security forces. Targets of the killings are Kurds suspected of links with the separatist PKK as well as Kurdish legal politicians and human rights activists.

Cowell, Alan (1992). Turkey's effort to quell rebel Kurds raises alarm in Ankara and Europe. *New York Times* (March 27), p. 10.

Reports on death squads in eastern Turkey and on the growing influence of the radical Kurdish nationalist party, the Workers' Party of Kurdistan (PKK).

Helsinki Watch (1992). *Kurds Massacred: Turkish Forces Kill Scores of Peaceful Demonstrators*. New York: Helsinki Watch. 15pp. [Reports series, Vol.4, Issue 9, June 1992]

Report of a mission to Southeastern Turkey to investigate the killings of Kurdish civilians by security troops during the 1992 Newroz celebrations in Cizre and Nusaybin. Provides the most detailed and balanced account of these massacres available in English, based on interviews with eyewitnesses. Documents also other recent cases of state terror against the Kurds and of violence against civilians by the Kurdish guerrilla movement PKK. Concludes that the Newroz massacres were not an anomaly, and that the security forces in the area can kill and torture civilians with impunity.

## **Kurds in Iraq in the 1980's**

### DESTRUCTION OF VILLAGES, CHEMICAL ATTACKS, MASS EXECUTIONS

Bonner, Raymond (1992). Always Remember. *The New Yorker* (September 28), pp. 46-51, 54-58, and 63-65.

An overview of the Anfal campaigns. [Not seen by the present author]

Galbraith, Peter (1991). *Kurdistan in the Time of Saddam Hussein*. A Staff Report to the Committee on Foreign Relations of the U.S. Senate, November 1991. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.

[Not seen by the present author]

Galbraith, Peter W., and Van Hollen, Christopher, Jr. (1988). *Chemical Weapons Use in Kurdistan: Iraq's Final Offensive*. A Staff Report to the Committee on Foreign

Relations, United States Senate, October 1988. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office. 46 pp.

A detailed report of Iraq's gas bombing of at least thirty Kurdish villages in August 1988, based on interviews with Iraqi Kurds who fled into Turkey. Quotes verbatim eyewitness accounts (pp.14-27) and summarizes the physical evidence of the use of chemical weapons.

Hay, Alistair, and Roberts, Gwynne (1990). The use of poison gas against the Iraqi Kurds: Analysis of bomb fragments, soil and wool samples, *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 263(8),1065-1066.

[Not seen by the present author]

Heyndrickx, A. (1989). Clinical toxicologic reports and conclusions concerning the biological and environmental samples brought to the Department of Toxicology at the State University of Ghent for toxicologic investigation. In *Documentation of the International Conference on Human Rights in Kurdistan*,14.-16. April 1989, *Hochschule Bremen*. Bremen: Initiative for Human Rights in Kurdistan, pp. 210-225.

Presents the results of chemical analysis of hair, urine, blood, water, stone, and bombshell samples taken at Halabja a few weeks after the gas attack of March 1988. Concludes that at least three war gases were used in combination: mustard gas, an organic phosphate such as tabun or sarin, and cyanide or derivatives.

İnsan Haklari Derneği İstanbul Şubesi (1990). *Halepçe'den Kamplara... Kürtler... (The Kurds... from Halabja to the Camps...)*. In Turkish. Istanbul: Alan-Belge. 87 pp.

Report on the Iraqi Kurds who fled into Turkey after the August 1988 gas attacks, prepared by the Istanbul branch of Turkey's Association for Human Rights. Deals mostly with the less than hospitable treatment of the refugees in Turkey, but also summarily lists Iraq's various chemical offensives against the Kurds.

Kurdish Program, The (1988). The destruction of Iraqi Kurdistan. *Kurdish Times* 2(2), 1-6. [Published by the Kurdish Program, Cultural Survival, Inc. New York]

Furnishes some detailed information on mass deportations of Iraqi Kurds, deliberate destruction of Kurdish villages, and the use of chemical arms against the Kurds by the Iraqi authorities. Source of this information is apparently the Kurdish leader Jalal Talabani, interviewed on the occasion of his visit to Washington in June 1988. Out of approximately five thousand villages existing in Iraqi Kurdistan in 1975, 3,479 are said to have been deliberately destroyed. The number of Iraqi Kurdish refugees in Iran is said to be 250,000, which includes 100,000 Fayli Kurds forcibly deported by the Iraqi authorities. Several cases of mass executions and mass disappearances are mentioned. Details are given on several chemical attacks preceding the bombing of Halabja. Surviving civilian casualties who sought medical treatment were arrested and reportedly executed. The international community has not responded in any way to Kurdish calls for protection.

Makiya, Kanan (1992). The Anfal: Uncovering an Iraqi campaign to exterminate the Kurds. *Harper's* (May), 53-61.

Moving report of a visit to Iraqi Kurdistan in November 1991 and analysis of some of the official Iraqi documents that were captured by the Kurds in the spring of 1991. Makiya provides new details about the *Anfal* offensives of 1988 and a reasoned estimate that at least 100,000 noncombatant Kurds were murdered in the course of these campaigns. Kurdish spokesmen quoted by the author even claim a figure of 182,000 dead or disappeared — an extrapolation based on the number of destroyed villages. 1,276 villages were totally destroyed during these campaigns alone. The article contains long interviews with survivors of the first gas attacks of 1987 and of the mass murders of 1988. (The author, himself an Iraqi Arab, had earlier published, under the pseudonym of Samir al-Khalil, the most penetrating analysis of the Iraqi Ba'ath regime to date, *Republic of Fear*).

Makiya, Kanan (1993). *Cruelty and Silence: War, Tyranny, Uprising, and the Arab World*. London: Jonathan Cape. 367 pp. [also New York: W.W. Norton and Co. 256 pp.]

An essay on the violence and cruelty of the Iraqi Ba'ath regime and the failure of Arab intellectuals to speak out in a moral voice. The first part of the book deals with the occupation of Kuwait, the uprisings of the Shiites and the Kurds following Iraq's defeat, and the *Anfal* campaigns. Chapter 4 (pp. 135-150) focuses on the village of Goktapa, where around 150 persons died in a chemical attack in May 1988. Chapter 5 (pp. 151-199), organized around a long interview with a boy who miraculously survived a fire squad, deals extensively and in great detail with the mass killings of Kurdish civilians in these campaigns (part of this material was earlier published in Makiya, 1992).

Medico International (1990). Deportations in Iraqi Kurdistan and Kurdish refugees in Iran. In *Yearbook of the Kurdish Academy 1990*. Ratingen (Germany): The Kurdish Academy. pp. 59-77.

Report on a visit by German parliamentarians and medical relief workers to Iraqi Kurdistan in November 1989 and a separate visit to refugee camps in Iran. Eyewitness accounts of destruction and new strategic settlements; interviews with Iraqi officials and Kurdish refugees. Quotes calculations by one of the Kurdish parties, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, on numbers of villages destroyed and persons deported. At least 100,000 persons said to have been deported or disappeared in the *Anfal* offensives; another 100,000 Iraqi Kurds are said to live in Iran.

Middle East Watch (1990). *Human Rights in Iraq*. New Haven: Yale University Press. 164 pp.

The first chapters of this important report (researched by David A. Korn) explain the institutions of repression in Iraq, the legal setting, and actual forms of repression. Numerous examples of political killings (including the notorious thallium poisonings), disappearances and deportations are listed. In many, but by no means all of these cases, the victims were Kurds. Chapter 5 (pp. 69-96) deals especially with the "Kurdish minority," sketching the struggle for autonomy and government reprisals against the Kurds and describing in detail the use of chemical weapons in 1988 and the forced resettlement and depopulation of Kurdistan. Official denials of chemical warfare by Iraqi authorities are also quoted and it is shown that they do not stand up to scrutiny. Finally, the report investigates the case of food poisoning in a Kurdish refugee camp in Turkey in 1989, affecting 2,000 refugees. There are indications that they may have been victims of deliberate poisoning with a chemical warfare agent, but the evidence is inconclusive.

Middle East Watch (1993). *Genocide in Iraq. The Anfal Campaign Against the Kurds*. New York: Human Rights Watch. 370 pp. [Commercial edition to appear at Yale University Press].

The most complete report to date on Iraq's treatment of the Kurds: destruction of villages, deportations, chemical bombardments, mass executions. Based on 350 interviews with eyewitnesses (among whom eight survivors of mass executions), a preliminary study of Iraqi military and intelligence documents captured by the Kurds during the March 1991 uprising, and some forensic evidence. Gives a very detailed account of the eight separate *Anfal* campaigns carried out between February and September 1988 and of the procedure by which tens of thousands captured in these campaigns were collected, screened and dispatched to firing squads or inhumane prisons. The total number of Kurds executed (not including those killed in the military campaigns themselves) "cannot conceivably be less than 50,000 and it may well be twice that number" (p. 345). The executions continued even after the Iraqi government had declared an amnesty (pp. 326-333). Two distinct minorities living in Kurdistan, Christians and Yezidis, were excluded from the amnesty, and fell victim to mass "disappearances" even after that date. The authors conclude that the Iraqi regime had intended to destroy the Iraqi Kurds in part and had done so, "resulting in the consummated crime of genocide" (20). They also analyze the role of the various state organs involved in the genocide and attempt to establish responsibility for the different aspects of this process.

Middle East Watch, and Physicians for Human Rights (1992). *Unquiet Graves: The Search for the Disappeared in Iraqi Kurdistan*. New York: Middle East Watch, and Physicians for Human Rights. 41 pp.

Report of a forensic team that visited Iraqi Kurdistan in December 1991 to investigate graves believed to contain the remains of victims of extra-legal killings. A number of graves near Sulaimaiyah were opened; bullet wounds in the skulls confirmed information from gravediggers and other local people that these were victims of summary executions. Some of the Iraqi secret police documents captured by the Kurds were inspected, including long lists of names of prisoners executed between 1985 and 1989. Although concentrating on the traces of extra-legal executions that could be established in Kurdistan, the report also mentions the much more numerous disappearances in the course of the Anfal campaign, quoting the Kurdish estimate of 180,000 persons. Few of the captured documents shed light on what happened to them, but one person interviewed had received official confirmation that his disappeared relatives were dead. Another interviewee was the sole survivor of a whole convoy of trucks loaded with women and children, who had been taken to southern Iraq, herded into bulldozer-dug pits and shot dead in 1988.

Middle East Watch, and Physicians for Human Rights (1993). *The Anfal Campaign in Iraqi Kurdistan: The Destruction of Koreme*. New York: Middle East Watch, and Physicians for Human Rights. 116 pp.

Report of a team of forensic investigators who carried out exhumations at three sites in Iraqi Kurdistan. A mass grave in the destroyed village of Koreme contained the remains of 26 men and boys, all of whom had died by gunfire at close range in a line indicating execution by firing squad. The circumstances of the execution are reconstructed on the basis of interviews with survivors. In the destroyed village of Birjinni, which had been bombed with chemical weapons, soil and other samples were taken; chemical analysis of the samples in a British military laboratory found degradation products of mustard gas and nerve agents. The report contains a detailed account of the chemical attack on Birjinni, based on interviews with survivors (pp. 31-44). The third exhumation was at a graveyard in Erbil, where survivors of the Anfal offensive had been taken.

Miller, Judith (1993). Iraq accused: A case of genocide. *The New York Times Magazine* (January 3), pp. 12-17, 28, 31-33, 36.

Discusses the Anfal campaign and Middle East Watch's work on the official documents captured in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Physicians for Human Rights (1989). *Winds of Death: Iraq's Use of Poison Gas against its Kurdish Population*. Somerville, Massachusetts: Physicians for Human Rights.

[Not seen by the present author]

Rasool, Shorsh Mustafa (1990). *Forever Kurdish. Statistics of atrocities in Iraqi Kurdistan*. Utrecht: Kurdish Information Bureau (distributed by the PUK foreign representation).

A detailed survey, district by district, of Kurdish villages forcibly evacuated and destroyed since the mid-1970s.

Resool, Shorsh (1990). *Destruction of a Nation*. Privately published.

[Not seen by the present author; referred to in Middle East Watch, 1993. Appears to be largely identical with Rasool, 1990]

Saeedpour, Vera Beaudin (1992). Establishing state motives for genocide: Iraq and the Kurds. In Fein, Helen (Ed.) *Genocide Watch*. New Haven: Yale University Press, pp. 59- 69.

Argues that "the poison gas attacks in August 1988 cannot be explained simply as a response to Kurdish rebellion or the Kurds' role in the Iran-Iraq war but are better explained as the final phase of a deliberate Iraqi plan to remove Kurds temporarily from their ancestral lands for economic and strategic reasons." The Kurdish region in Iraq has great strategic importance, which further increased when Iraq's access to the Gulf was virtually cut off during the war. The villages subjected to gas attack in August 1988 were all located in a zone close to the major road, railroad and pipeline connecting Iraq with Turkey. The author concludes that the depopulation of Iraqi Kurdistan was a deliberate policy, for which the Kurds' siding with Iran during the war was only a pretext. Deportations and earlier use of chemical weapons against the Kurds are briefly discussed, presenting largely the same data as given earlier in *Kurdish Program* (1988). (The author is the chairperson of *The Kurdish Program*).

Sherzad, A. (1992). The Kurdish movement in Iraq:1975-88. In Kreyenbroek, Philip G., and Sperl, Stefan (Eds.), *The Kurds: A Contemporary Overview*. London: Routledge, pp. 134-142.

An analysis of changes in the social composition of the Kurdish movement in Iraq, with comments on the role of neighboring countries, Iraq's radical solution of its Kurdish problem (deportation, destruction of villages, chemical weapons), and demographic change in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Stoel, Max van der (1992). *Report on the Situation of Human Rights in Iraq, Prepared by Mr. Max van der Stoel, Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights, in Accordance with Commission Resolution 1991/74*. (E/CN.4/1992/31,18 February 1992). United Nations Economic and Social Council, Commission on Human Rights. 86 pp.

A careful and well-documented survey of the human rights situation in Iraq, based on independent investigation, including confidential interviews with victims and eyewitnesses in Iraq, Iran and Saudi Arabia. Section II.B.1 (pp. 27-30) details violations affecting the Kurds and discusses evidence of mass executions and atrocities committed by the Government which, the Rapporteur found "go beyond the cruelty and brutality directed against the population at large" (p. 28). The *Anfal* and other operations "were indiscriminately aimed against the Kurds as such" (p. 29). The *Anfal* operations in particular "constituted genocide-type activities which did in fact result in the extermination of a part of this population and which continue to have an impact on the lives of the people as a whole" (p. 65).

Tuşalp, Erbil (1989). *Zehir Yüklü Bulutlar: Halepçe'den Hakkari'ye* (Clouds carrying poison: From Halabja to Hakkari). In Turkish. Ankara: Bilgi. 172 pp.

The core of this journalistic book consists of interviews with Iraqi Kurds who fled into Turkey after the August 1988 gas attacks. These eyewitness accounts (pp. 53-61) are sandwiched between observations on the situation of the Kurds in Iraq and Turkey and critical remarks on the government policies towards the Kurds of both countries.

Viorst, Milton (1988). Poison gas and genocide: The shaky case against Iraq. *Washington Post* (October 5).

Claims that the gas attacks of August 1988 were only against rebel positions, and that the symptoms observed in refugees who reached Turkey could have been produced by "a powerful tear gas, a conventional weapon in today's warfare." The author asserts that there is no convincing evidence of genocide or chemical warfare by Iraq. (In order to reach this conclusion Viorst had to ignore numerous eyewitness reports according to which civilians in villages were targeted, and which consistently described the effects of the poison gases).

Zibari, Hisyar (1989). The missing Barzani Kurds. In *Documentation of the International Conference on Human Rights in Kurdistan, 14.-16. April 1989, Hochschule Bremen*. Bremen: Initiative for Human Rights in Kurdistan, pp. 205-209.

Documents the case of 8000 male members of the Barzani tribe, who have disappeared after having been taken from the resettlement camps where they were then living and driven off in military trucks in August 1983. Describes also a new project for the forced resettlement of a quarter million Kurds in strategic "new towns" and four internment camps containing around 85,000 people previously deported to other parts of the country.

### **The Kurds in the (Former) Soviet Union**

Laber, Jeri (1990). Stalin's Dumping Ground. *New York Review of Books* (October 11), 50-53.

Report of a visit by Helsinki Watch director Laber to Kazakhstan, containing an interview with Kurdish academician Nadirov on the deportations of Kurds in the Soviet Union. Nadirov claims that half of those deported perished on the way.

Nadirov, Nadir K. (1992). Population transfer: A scattered people seeks its nationhood. *Cultural Survival Quarterly* (Winter), pp. 38-40.

Discusses deportations of Kurds in the Soviet Union in the 1930s and 1940s, with some statistics on dramatic decreases of the Kurdish population of what once was the Kurdish National District (Lachin). As elderly people remember, "all the adult males in a town would be gathered at night and sent off by train. No one knows where they went, and none of them returned. After the men the women and children were packed into freight cars and also sent to unknown destinations" (p. 38). The scattering of the Kurds hastened the loss of their culture and ethnic identity.

Vanly, Ismet Chériff (1992). The Kurds in the Soviet Union. In Kreyenbroek, Philip G., and Sperl, Stefan (Eds.), *The Kurds: A Contemporary Overview*. London: Routledge, pp. 193-218.

Brief historical survey from the late nineteenth century down to the recent present. Describes Stalin's shifting policies towards the Kurds, and mass deportations of Kurds from Armenia and Azerbaijan in 1937 and from Georgia in 1944. Of the last group, most adult males were deported separately and their fate is at present still unknown" (p. 203). Reproduces and analyzes the available population statistics with their mysteriously declining numbers of Kurds.