

and fertile parts of Syria . . . where the climate is as benign as in Florida and California whither New York millionaires journey each year for health and recreation. . . . And all this was done at great expense of money and effort.” Quoted in Balakian, *The Burning Tigris*, p. 376.

- 55 Peter Balakian, personal communication, September 11, 2005.
- 56 “French Parliament Recognises 1915 Armenian Genocide,” Reuters dispatch, May 29, 1998. However, “the wording of the resolution was deliberately designed to remove any suggestion of the responsibility of the modern Turkish state for the genocide; indeed no perpetrator agency of any sort was recalled in the brief statement of recognition.” Bloxham, *The Great Game of Genocide*, p. 224.
- 57 “Turkey Denounces Armenian Genocide Vote in Commons,” CBC News, April 22, 2004, <http://www.cbc.ca/stories/print/2004/04/22/turkeyreaxn040422>.
- 58 Eric Schmitt, “House Backs Off on Turkish Condemnation,” *New York Times*, October 20, 2000.
- 59 Marinka Peschmann, “A Position John Kerry Has Held for 20 Years,” Canada Free Press, September 17, 2004.
- 60 Tezgul quoted in Balakian, *The Burning Tigris*, p. 391.

BOX 4A THE ANFAL CAMPAIGN AGAINST IRAQI KURDS, 1988

Twenty to twenty-five million Kurds are spread across Iran, Iraq, Turkey, and Syria, constituting by most estimates the world’s largest nation without a state of its own. In March 1987, Saddam Hussein’s cousin from his hometown of Tikrit, Ali Hassan al-Majid, was appointed Secretary-General of the ruling Ba’ath Party’s Northern Region. This included Iraqi Kurdistan, a Kurdish-dominated area that had long chafed under Ba’athist rule.

In the wake of the First World War, with US President Woodrow Wilson’s call for national self-determination still resounding, Kurds were promised a homeland of their own – Kurdistan. However, the victorious Allies backed away from this pledge, made in the Treaty of Sèvres (1920). In an attempt to court the new Turkish regime of Kemal Ataturk, and fearful of destabilizing Iraq and Syria (then under British and French mandates, respectively), the Allies reneged on their commitment to Kurdish independence. The Kurds instead were divided among Turkey, Iraq, and Syria. The ascent to power of Saddam Hussein in 1968 (he became president in 1979) at first seemed to augur well for the Kurds; an autonomy agreement was reached in 1970. But it rapidly broke down, and in March 1974 the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) rose up against the central regime, sparking a full-scale war the following year and the flight of 130,000 Kurds to Iran.

In 1980, war erupted between Iraq and neighboring Iran. The Kurds were now viewed as a “fifth column,” draining military resources from the struggle with Iran. Once Iraq and Iran had reached a ceasefire, the full venom of the Iraqi regime – judged by the scholar and activist Noam Chomsky to be “perhaps the most violent and repressive . . . in the world”¹ – could be directed against the Kurds. Al-Majid, whose genocidal exploits with poison gas would earn him

the moniker “Chemical Ali” in the West, was Saddam Hussein’s chosen agent for solving the “Kurdish problem.”

By the time the Anfal Campaign was unleashed in 1988,* the Kurds had already suffered grievously at Iraqi hands. The most notable instance was one of the largest gendercidal massacres of modern times (for more on gendercide, see Chapter 13). A particularly restive Kurdish clan was the Barzani; its members had been forcibly relocated south to desert wastes, where they lived under the watchful eyes and ready guns of Iraqi security forces. The onset of the Iran–Iraq war in 1980 heightened the sense of threat among the Ba’ath leadership. Although the displaced populations were not involved in subversive activities, two of the clan leader’s sons were leading guerrilla forces in the north. That was enough. All 8,000 men among the displaced Barzanis were rounded up and transported to southern Iraq, where they disappeared. Saddam Hussein left little doubt about what had happened to them: “They betrayed the country and they betrayed the covenant, and we meted out a stern punishment to them, and they went to hell.”²

In February–March 1988, the regime moved to full-fledged genocide against Iraqi Kurds, featuring an offensive that stunned the world. On March 16, an aerial attack with chemical weapons was launched on the Kurdish town of Halabji, near the Iranian border. Thousands of civilians died from bombardments with mustard gas and sarin, a nerve agent. After the raid, journalists and photographers reached the scene from Iranian territory; photographs and video footage of Kurdish corpses were flashed around the world. It was not enough to arouse sustained international opposition, however. Governments, both Western and non-Western, were too committed to the Iraqi side in the Iran–Iraq war, too covetous of Iraqi oil, and too anxious to sell Iraq weapons and chemical ingredients, to care much about the fate of a dispossessed minority.³

The Anfal campaign consisted of eight distinct operations lasting until September 1988. Throughout this period, the standard Iraqi strategy was to attack Kurdish settlements with artillery and airstrikes, conduct mass killings on the spot, and cart off the remainder of the population for “processing” further south. Hundreds of thousands of Kurds were trucked to concentration camps, most notoriously the Topzawa camp near the northern Iraqi city of Kirkuk. There, the standard gendercidal selection procedure was implemented, with adult and teenage males separated for execution. The operations of the killers were “uncannily reminiscent of . . . the activities of the *Einsatzkommandos*, or mobile killing units, in the Nazi-occupied lands of Eastern Europe” (Chapter 6):

* The name chosen for the campaign, Anfal (“the spoils”), referred to the eighth *sura* of the Qur’an, which pledges to “cast into the unbelievers’ hearts terror . . . smite above the necks, and smite every finger of them,” delivering “the chastisement of the Fire.”

Some groups of prisoners were lined up, shot from the front, and dragged into predug mass graves; others were made to lie down in pairs, sardine-style, next to mounds of fresh corpses, before being killed; still others were tied together, made to stand on the lip of the pit, and shot in the back so that they would fall forward into it – a method that was presumably more efficient from the point of view of the killers. Bulldozers then pushed earth or sand loosely over the heaps of corpses. Some of the grave sites contained dozens of separate pits and obviously contained the bodies of thousands of victims.⁴

Children, women, and the elderly were also swept up in the mass executions, killed in bombardments and gassings, or selectively targeted after the “battle-age” males had been destroyed. Others perished from starvation or disease in the concentration camps. While gendercidal slaughter was ubiquitous and systematic,⁵ the targeting of the wider Kurdish population was “subject to extreme regional variations,” with the majority of indiscriminate murder occurring in “two distinct ‘clusters’ that were affected by the third and fourth Anfal [i.e., stages of the campaign].” The area targeted most systematically for root-and-branch genocide appears to have been southern Germian, which abutted the Arab heartland of Iraq and was targeted during the third Anfal (April 7–20, 1988). The region was considered a hotbed of rebels from the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), the Kurdish group that was the principal military target of the Anfal campaign. While “males aged fifteen to fifty routinely vanished from all parts of Germian,” in this southern region “the disappeared include[d] significant numbers of women and children.” Mass executions involving “an estimated two thousand women and children” took place at a site on Hamrion Mountain, between the cities of Tikrit and Kirkuk.⁶ Although the mass killing phase had concluded by the end of 1988, large areas of Kurdish territory were left devastated and either totally depopulated or stripped of their men.⁷

At the end of the 1991 Gulf War, Kurdish aspirations for autonomy were finally realized. When Kurds rose up in renewed rebellion, Hussein – a ceasefire with Allied forces freshly signed – turned his army against them. Hundreds of thousands fled to Iran and Turkey, prompting the Allies to create a safe area and no-fly zone. This provided the Kurds with a territorial autonomy that has lasted, in effect, until the present.

As a result of the uprising, Kurdish forces seized some four million documents from Iraqi archives in the country’s northern regions, and transported them to safe areas. The documents became the foundation of Human Rights Watch’s investigation of Anfal. Examination of the documents left little doubt in the investigators’ minds that Iraq had committed genocide against the Kurds: “concerning the crucial 1987–1989 period . . . the evidence is sufficiently strong to prove a case of genocidal intent on the part of the Iraqi Government.” About 100,000 Kurds – Kurdish estimates range up to 180,000 – perished in Anfal, “systematically put to death in large numbers by order of the central Iraqi government.”⁸

In December 2003, nine months after their controversial invasion of Iraq, US forces discovered a dishevelled Saddam Hussein on a farm along the Tigris River. At the time of writing (September 2005), the interim Iraqi government was preparing to place Hussein and a number of other Ba'ath leaders, including Ali Hassan al-Majid, on trial for genocide and crimes against humanity. Reflecting US opposition to the International Criminal Court (ICC – see Chapter 15), the accused would not face an international tribunal, leading many to wonder whether the proceedings would be merely a kangaroo court. Nonetheless, there was at last the possibility that justice would be administered to Hussein and his henchmen for their many crimes, including the genocidal rampage against Iraqi Kurds.

FURTHER STUDY

Human Rights Watch-Middle East, *Iraq's Crime of Genocide: The Anfal Campaign Against the Kurds*. New Haven, CT: Human Rights Watch/Yale University Press, 1995. The most intensive investigation of the Anfal events; see also *The Anfal Campaign in Iraqi Kurdistan: The Destruction of Koreme*. Kanan Makiya, *Republic of Fear: The Politics of Modern Iraq*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998. A good overview of the terroristic Saddam Hussein regime; see also *Cruelty and Silence*. Jonathan C. Randal, *After Such Knowledge, What Forgiveness? My Encounters with Kurdistan*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999. Taut journalistic account of Iraq's war against the Kurds, with detailed attention to the historical context.

NOTES

- 1 Chomsky quoted in Kanan Makiya, *Cruelty and Silence: War, Tyranny, Uprising, and the Arab World* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1994), p. 273.
- 2 See Martin van Bruinessen, "Genocide in Kurdistan?," in George J. Andreopoulos, ed., *Genocide: Conceptual and Historical Dimensions* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), pp. 156–57.
- 3 As indicated, this followed an extended pattern of undermining and betrayal of Kurdish aspirations by the "international community." A solid overview of the machinations surrounding the Kurds in the 1970s is given by Jonathan C. Randal, *After Such Knowledge, What Forgiveness?* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999). Of the US and Western attitude during Anfal, Samantha Power writes: "US policymakers and Western journalists treated Iraqi violence [during Anfal] as if it were an understandable attempt to suppress rebellion or a grisly consequence of the Iran–Iraq war. Since the United States had chosen to back Iraq in that war, it refrained from protest, denied it had conclusive proof of Iraqi chemical weapons use, and insisted that Saddam Hussein would eventually come around. . . . The Washington establishment deemed Hussein's broader campaign of destruction, like

- Pol Pot's a decade before and Turkey's back in 1915, an 'internal affair.'" Power, *"A Problem from Hell": America and the Age of Genocide* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), pp. 171–72.
- 4 Human Rights Watch-Middle East (hereafter, HRW-ME), *Iraq's Crime of Genocide: The Anfal Campaign Against the Kurds* (New Haven, CT: Human Rights Watch/Yale University Press, 1995), p. 12.
 - 5 For a more detailed analysis of the gendercidal aspects of the slaughter, and the visible evidence of it following the campaign, see Adam Jones/Gendercide Watch, "Case Study: The Anfal Campaign (Iraqi Kurdistan), 1988," http://www.gendercide.org/case_anfal.html, from which this boxed text is adapted.
 - 6 See HRW-ME, *Iraq's Crime of Genocide*, pp. 13, 96, 115, 171. One small boy, Taimour Abdullah Ahmad, witnessed and survived a massacre of children and women; his story received wide international attention. See "An Interview with the Anfal Survivor, Taimour," <http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~irdp/taimour.html>.
 - 7 For a vivid description of the "almost total economic stagnation," "deserted" factories, and "villages . . . populated by only women and children" in the Kurdish zone, see Jeffrey Pilkington, "Beyond Humanitarian Relief: Economic Development Efforts in Northern Iraq," *Forced Migration Review*, <http://www.fmreview.org/rpn236.htm>.
 - 8 HRW-ME, *Iraq's Crime of Genocide*, pp. xvii, x.