



# The Limits of Trauma Discourse

## Women Anfal Survivors in Kurdistan-Iraq

*Karin Mlodoch*

**Studien des Zentrum Moderner Orient  
Herausgegeben von Ulrike Freitag**





**Zentrum Moderner Orient**

Geisteswissenschaftliche Zentren Berlin e.V.

**Karin Mlodoch**

**The Limits of Trauma Discourse  
Women Anfal Survivors in  
Kurdistan-Iraq**

**Studien 34**



KLAUS SCHWARZ VERLAG • BERLIN

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available at <http://dnb.de>.

Zentrum Moderner Orient  
Geisteswissenschaftliche Zentren Berlin e.V.  
Studien, edited by Ulrike Freitag

Kirchweg 33  
14129 Berlin  
Tel. 030 / 80307 228  
[www.zmo.de](http://www.zmo.de)

© Klaus Schwarz Verlag Berlin  
All rights reserved  
First edition 2014  
Layout/Typesetting: ZMO  
Cover design: Jörg Rückmann, Berlin  
Photo: Anfal woman at a photo exhibition in Erbil, October 2011  
(© HAUKARI e.V., [www.haukari.de](http://www.haukari.de))

Printed in Germany

ISBN: 978-3-87997-719-2



This book was printed with financial assistance of the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research and HAUKARI e.V.  
The project on which this publication is based was supported with funds from the Federal Ministry for Education and Research (funding code 01UG1413). The author is responsible for the content of this publication.

To  
SHAZADA HUSSEIN MOHAMMED  
DIRK PETERS  
AND  
MY LATE FATHER HELMUT MLODOCH



# Acknowledgements

This book is based on my doctoral thesis submitted to the Department of Social Psychology, Ethnopschoanalysis and Psychotraumatology at the University of Klagenfurt, Austria. It brings a work process of seven years to an end. For me, what follows is more than a summary of a research project. It documents the lives of Anfal women in Rizgary over the last twenty years; it also documents a significant part of my own work and life in Kurdistan-Iraq in this period. Many instances left me feeling that it is impossible to describe the multi-faceted reality of Kurdistan-Iraq and the tremendous and rapid transformation it has gone through in two decades. And in even more instances, I felt unable to really grasp the abysses Anfal women have gone through and the enormous strength they have shown to survive and to be the wonderful women I know today. I continued to work with Anfal women throughout the writing process; and every time I came back from a visit to Kurdistan, I felt I had to add new observations and aspects: a never-ending process. Presenting the book now, I try to calm myself down by considering it just a stopover in a process of working with Anfal women that I hope will continue.

I thank Shazada Hussein Mohammed and Aska Ali Hamah-Ameen, whose strengths, courage and friendship inspired this study. I thank all the women and men Anfal survivors I interviewed for my research, who have welcomed and hosted me and - despite their many hardships - have never tired of telling me about their lives, giving me interviews, and answering my often repetitive questions. I deeply thank my husband Mam Pola, who has in so many ways opened the German society up to me and helped me make sense of what I saw and heard - and who remained patient with me though he hates all kinds of long term projects. I thank Gulnaz Aziz Qadir for an inspiring discussion that has lasted two decades in the meantime: the combination of her analytical views and her emotional commitment to Anfal women gave inspiration and orientation to my work. I also thank Kamaran Abdullah from the Ministry of Martyrs and Anfal Affairs

of the Kurdistan Regional Government for his advice and background information.

My thanks also go to the Zentrum Moderner Orient, Berlin for giving me the time and institutional framework to write this thesis and the chance to join the vibrant multidisciplinary discussion at the institute: I would like to specifically name the ZMO director Prof. Ulrike Freitag and vice director Dr. Sonja Hegasy for their patience and advice and my colleagues Dr. Katharina Lange, Dr. Katrin Bromber, and Dr. Heike Liebau for their continuous encouragement and support. Special thanks go to Svenja Becherer for her constant friendly but firm pressure, her practical help, and her moral support.

I thank Prof. Klaus Ottomeyer and Prof. Luise Reddemann at the University of Klagenfurt for their curiosity and interest in my work and for giving it theoretical orientation and Prof. Josef Berghold for agreeing to review my thesis.

I extend specific and deep thanks to Dr. Andrea Fischer-Tahir for sharing with me her incredible knowledge of the Kurdish region, for frequently helping me through the challenges of the academic jungle and for revising the methodological and historical parts of my thesis.

I thank Sunniva Greve and Mitch Cohen for their language revision and Nigjar Marduchaeva for helping me with the bibliography and the index.

I thank my colleague and friend Susanne Bötte from HAUKARI, who took so much of the NGO work load on her shoulders so that I could write. I thank my friends Karin Dorsch, Heike Iggena, and Usche Merk for their encouragement and help. I thank my dear friend Ernst Meyer for his constant support and friendship and for taking over so many daily tasks to give me time to write.

I thank my mother Helga Mlodoch for her incessant affectionate support, and I deeply thank and apologize to my wonderful son Dario who had to renounce too many relaxed weekends and holidays recently but never ceased to encourage me.

My biggest thanks however, go to my friend Dirk Peters, my overall and closest supervisor, who accompanied and advised me patiently, though ultimately he lost some patience and subtly forced me to finally set an endpoint. So here it is.

Berlin, November 2014

## **I cannot cry for all of you**

Mam Pola, 2010<sup>i</sup>

(...)

Please forgive me that I cannot cry for all of you.

I only cry for one of your children:

The child that sensed the smell of cucumber before its death.

That longed for a cucumber until the very moment it died.

Ah, God, how could Azrael<sup>ii</sup> take the soul of this child?

And, God, have you given a cucumber to this child in that world?

I cannot cry for all of you.

I only cry for one of your beautiful girls.

Ay, Mariam.

Ah, God, was Azrael not ashamed to take Mariam's soul?

And, God, forgive my question:

Has Mariam found her fiancé in that world?

I cannot cry for all of you.

I only cry for one of your old men, Haji Mohammed.

My eyes are full of tears for him.

Ah God, he came to Your house.

He had become a Haji, he was a guest in Your holy house.

But the Moslems of Your house killed two of his sons in front of his eyes.

Black dogs have eaten their bodies.

Forgive me that I cannot cry for all of you.

As I am also a human.

I cannot take up all your pain.

But tonight I write the names of all of you,

One by one,

On the stones

And on the leaves of the trees in Paradise.

So that your offspring will not forget Anfal, and Nugra Salman, and the road of Ar Ar<sup>iii</sup> and

Hajjaj<sup>iv</sup>!

**i** My translation from Kurdish

**ii** Angel of the Death in Islamic theology

**iii** The road to the prison of Nugra Salman

**iv** Ruthless notorious Iraqi guard in the prison of Nugra Salman



# Content

|     |                                                                             |     |
|-----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 1   | Introduction                                                                | 15  |
| 2   | Conceptual framework                                                        | 29  |
| 2.1 | Trauma - a contested concept                                                | 30  |
| 2.2 | Individual trauma symptoms                                                  | 43  |
| 2.3 | Trauma memories - trauma narratives                                         | 50  |
| 2.4 | Can a collective suffer? Approaches to the notion of<br>»collective trauma« | 54  |
| 2.5 | The political and social dimensions of trauma                               | 58  |
| 2.6 | Political reconciliation and transitional justice                           | 60  |
| 3   | Historical, political and social context                                    | 67  |
| 3.1 | Iraq under the Baath regime - welfare, control and<br>punishment            | 68  |
| 3.2 | The Kurds in Iraq                                                           | 83  |
| 3.3 | The Anfal Campaign                                                          | 94  |
| 3.4 | Kurdistan-Iraq 1991-2003 - a makeshift life                                 | 104 |
| 3.5 | The fall of the Baath regime in 2003 -<br>political transition              | 113 |
| 3.6 | Kurdistan-Iraq after 2003                                                   | 127 |
| 4   | Research access, methodology and material                                   | 137 |
| 4.1 | Personal access and biases                                                  | 139 |
| 4.2 | Methodological framework                                                    | 151 |
| 4.3 | The interviews - methodological approach<br>and considerations              | 155 |
| 4.4 | Interviewing Anfal women - interview conditions                             | 163 |
| 5   | Research location and central figures                                       | 167 |
| 5.1 | The research location                                                       | 167 |
| 5.2 | Key research figures                                                        | 180 |
| 6   | Narrating Anfal - women survivors' »subjective truth«                       | 207 |

|      |                                                                                       |     |
|------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 6.1  | Trauma narrations – between denial and speaking out                                   | 209 |
| 6.2  | Trauma images – dominant and recurring motifs in Anfal women’s narrations             | 212 |
| 6.3  | Shared memories – collective narratives                                               | 239 |
| 6.4  | Summary: Anfal women’s subjective truth                                               | 241 |
| 7    | Anfal women in the aftermath of Anfal (1988-1991)                                     | 243 |
| 7.1  | Life under perpetrator control – fear, distrust and hardship                          | 243 |
| 7.2  | The next nightmare – the Kurdish exodus in 1991                                       | 248 |
| 8    | Uncertainty continues – the psychological impact of disappearances                    | 253 |
| 8.1  | Literature and experiences from other contexts                                        | 255 |
| 8.2  | Anfal women: The uncanny presence/absence of the missing                              | 261 |
| 9    | Anfal women’s life situations between 1991 and 2003                                   | 267 |
| 9.1  | Social factors – traditional family and gender values                                 | 267 |
| 9.2  | The economic circumstances – poverty, work and social control                         | 285 |
| 9.3  | Political and societal responses to Anfal women                                       | 305 |
| 10   | Anfal women’s resources and strengths                                                 | 315 |
| 11   | Summary and discussion 1988–2003                                                      | 325 |
| 12   | Anfal women after 2003 – political transition                                         | 333 |
| 12.1 | Anfal women’s desire for truth – the mass graves and the process of evidence          | 333 |
| 12.2 | Anfal women’s desire for justice – first steps in the field of »transitional justice« | 348 |
| 12.3 | New violence, new conflict – contrasting narratives of victimhood                     | 368 |
| 13   | Anfal women in Kurdish national discourse and policy                                  | 381 |
| 14   | Changes in Anfal women’s social realities after 2003                                  | 395 |
| 14.1 | Safety, mobility and economic recovery                                                | 395 |
| 14.2 | Government assistance to Anfal survivors                                              | 397 |

|      |                                                                                                 |     |
|------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 14.3 | The reconstruction of social and family structures                                              | 400 |
| 14.4 | Social reconstruction along patrilineal family patterns – differentiation and individualization | 406 |
| 14.5 | The ambivalent role of second-generation Anfal survivors                                        | 411 |
| 14.6 | Rizgary – a transforming location between past and present                                      | 415 |
| 14.7 | Summary: Social reconstruction and the erosion of collective structures                         | 418 |
| 15   | Trauma and coping in a transforming context                                                     | 421 |
| 15.1 | The persistence of traumatic images                                                             | 421 |
| 15.2 | Coping                                                                                          | 426 |
| 15.3 | Previously repressed memories coming to the fore                                                | 448 |
| 15.4 | From victims to survivors – the transformation of collective memories and narratives            | 455 |
| 16   | Anfal women between victimhood and agency                                                       | 459 |
| 16.1 | Between loyalty to the dead and new perspectives                                                | 459 |
| 16.2 | The significance of commemoration ceremonies and memorials                                      | 465 |
| 16.3 | The Anfal Women Memorial Forum Project, Rizgary                                                 | 469 |
| 17   | Conclusions                                                                                     | 485 |
| 18   | References                                                                                      | 499 |
| 19   | Index                                                                                           | 533 |



# 1 Introduction

*Iraq: Dealing with the legacy of the past  
under conditions of ongoing violence*

Eleven years after the US-led invasion of Iraq in March 2003 and the collapse of Saddam Hussein's Baath-regime, the world's eyes are once again on Iraq: the 2014 brutal advance of the »Islamic State« terror militias into large parts of Iraq marks the failure of the country's national political process. This is, on one hand the result of decades of sectarian policy under the Baath regime and the regimes following it, and, on the other hand further escalates the sectarian conflicts in Iraq and the fragmentation of the Iraqi society along ethnic-national and religious boundaries.

Violence and conflict in Iraq cannot simply be explained - as frequently occurs in public debate - as the impact of the US-led invasion and occupation, but instead reflect also decades of dictatorship under the Baath regime, which exposed large swaths of the Iraqi population and members of different ethnic, religious and regional groups to savage violence and human rights violations, destroyed individuals and social structures throughout Iraq and compelled the population to withdraw to its narrow ethnic, religious and regional frameworks.

Three hundred mass graves have been found throughout the country after the demise of the Baath regime. In the shadow of on-going violence and conflict, the legacy of the Baath regime remains largely unaddressed: Kurdish survivors of

poison gas attacks and the genocidal Anfal Campaign, Shia survivors of massacres in the south, Marsh Arab victims of mass deportation and the relatives of the disappeared and executed opponents of the regime from all regions of Iraq wait vigilantly for the opening of the mass graves and demand evidence, justice, compensation, and the political acknowledgement of their ordeal.

The debate on how to deal with past crimes, pushed forward by the US-led Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) and Iraqi opposition groups in the immediate aftermath of the invasion in 2003, has long been side-lined from the political agenda by on-going political conflict and the more recent waves of violence. When the term »reconciliation« is used in Iraq today, it refers to the urgent need for a national compromise that includes also former perpetrators and that ends current violence. The current national political debate in Iraq is characterized by contrasting and conflicting memories and narratives of past and present violence; competing factions use victimhood as a significant argument to legitimize power claims at the national level. Frequently exploited for political aims and played off against each other, a policy that fosters hierarchies and competition between different victim groups, survivors feel increasingly marginalized and alienated from the political process, at both the national and the regional level.

### *The Anfal campaign in Kurdistan-Iraq 1988*

My research in this broader context goes back to one of the most heinous Baathist crimes: the so-called Anfal Campaign against the Iraqi Kurdish population in 1988.

Anfal is the name given to the 8th Sura of the Qur'an entitled »the spoils of war« and was the code word the Iraqi regime used for an extensive military operation in the Kurdish rural areas in Northern Iraq in 1988, planned long beforehand and publicly justified as punishment for the Kurdish »collaboration« with Iraq's war enemy, Iran.

From February to September 1988, thousands of Kurdish villages in eight different rural areas were destroyed. The inhabitants were herded together; more than a hundred thousand young men and women (Kurdish sources figure the number of victims as 182,000) were segregated and deported. Only some of them have meanwhile been identified in mass gravesites; the individual fate of most of them is uncertain to this day.

Tens of thousands of elderly people and women with children were held prisoners for months in humiliating conditions in the notorious detention camps of Nugra Salman and Dibs; many, especially children and elderly died here from starvation and exhaustion. In September 1988, the survivors of the Anfal Campaign were granted, what the regime called an »amnesty« and transferred to so-called collective towns (*mujamma'at*) or resettlement camps, which the Baath regime propagated as a step in the direction of modernizing the backward Kurdish farmers. Up until 1991, Anfal survivors lived in these camps under the direct control of the perpetrators.

When in 1991 - after the first US-led invasion of Iraq - the Kurdish region gained provisional autonomy, the reconstruction of the destroyed areas began, many families returned to their original villages. Other survivors, and especially the large number of women with children, whose husbands, siblings, parents, sons and daughters were missing, stayed out in the collective towns in uncertainty and precarious socio-economic situations, awaiting the return of their beloved ones. Many live there until today.

### *Access, methods, research topic*

I came to Kurdistan-Iraq in December 1991 as a team member of the German NGO medico international engaged in rehabilitation projects in the destroyed rural areas. In 1993, I came to the collective town of Sumud in the Germyan area in the southeast of the Kurdish region, which was struck in

April 1988 by what is seen as the cruellest of the eight operations that made up the Anfal Campaign. More than fifty per cent of the deported and killed Anfal victims from this region were women and children; and the majority of survivors were subjected to months of detention.

Here I met a large group of women Anfal survivors and was struck by their situation: Shocked and disoriented by the experience of extreme violence they had gone through, torn by grief and uncertainty on the fate of their missing beloved ones, they lived in extreme poverty, but developed enormous energies to survive and grow their often numerous children. They were reluctant to resettle to their villages or to engage in any other economic initiative; instead they were daily awaiting the return of their missing relatives. They seemed to me as if »frozen in the past«. There was a complex blend of inner paralysis, socio-economic constraints, traditional gender concepts and public victim discourses that kept these women in the role of mourning and waiting women and that prompted me to henceforth focus on women Anfal survivors in my practical work and to initiate in-depth research on their psychosocial situation, which ultimately led to the doctoral thesis published here.

In the Kurdish language women Anfal survivors are referred to as *bewa-jin-î Enfal* (Anfal women without men), *daykan-î Enfal* (Anfal mothers) or *kes-û-karî Enfal* (Anfal relatives) and are thus defined by the disappearance or loss of their relatives, side-lining their own experience of extreme violence and loss.<sup>1</sup> In the following I will refer to the women as Anfal women (*jin-î Enfal*, Plural *jine Enfalakan*), a term

**1** The English translation »Anfal widows« usually used in international publications is yet another incorrect definition of their legal and social status. With reference to the use of the term »survivors of violence« in the international human rights and transitional justice debate, some researchers and the media have begun to use the term *peshmawakan-î Enfal*. Literally, however, this term means »the remnants of Anfal« and is used to describe (food) »leftovers« in ordinary language. Many intellectuals and survivors reject the term for this reason. I have recently heard the terms *najadbun-î*

that they use themselves and that encompasses the entire Anfal experience.

At the centre of my research is a group of Anfal women, who still live in the former resettlement camp of Sumud, today a middle-size town renamed Rizgary. I had the privilege to know, work with and closely follow them over a period of meanwhile more than twenty years. I worked with them in rehabilitation, income-generating and psychosocial counselling projects and have been involved since 2008 in what is called the Anfal Women Memorial Forum Project where Anfal women engage for a self-designed memorial site. My study is based on my working experience and interviews made in various time periods between 1999 and 2012. For the analysis of the material I adopted exclusively qualitative methods, namely Mayring's (2000) qualitative content analysis.

The analysis of Anfal women's narratives and activities is at the heart of my research and allows me to grasp their own subjective perspective on their Anfal experience and their coping process in the aftermath. Tracing their memories, narratives and coping strategies and their transformation through the political and social changes in Iraq over the last twenty years, the study examines which factors have blocked and which have stabilized the women and thus underlines the close interweavement of individual coping with trauma and the societal and political responses to the violent experience. It explores the collective dimension of Anfal women's experience, their strength and resources, and documents their long and painful path from victims to survivors. It thus gives a powerful example of coping with extreme violence under conditions of ongoing conflict that evolved beyond discourses of trauma and healing.

*Anfal, rizgarbun-î Enfal* - both meaning: »those who have been spared by Anfal« and *auan ka djemabun le Enfal*, »those who remained after Anfal«.

### *Current state of research*

Although the Anfal Campaigns against the Kurds in Iraq stand among the greatest crimes against humanity of the late twentieth century, the Anfal case has hitherto remained under-researched. Until 2003, publications on Anfal on an international level were rare, not least due to the unstable security situation and the isolation of the Kurdish region until 2003. The Iraqi author Kanan Makiya was the first to speak about Anfal to an international audience in an article in the US *Harper's Magazine* (Makiya, 1992) and, in greater detail, later in and in his book *Cruelty and Silence* (Makiya, 1993). Throughout the 1990s, Anfal was addressed for the most part by human rights and humanitarian organizations working in the region (e.g. the German branch of the Society for Threatened Peoples - GfBV, medico international, Human Rights Watch), by journalists visiting the Kurdish region (Randal, 1998; Power, 2003) and by Kurdish and Iraqi exile organizations (Kurdish Institute Paris, Kurdish Human Rights Project London, International Alliance for Justice Paris). Ziad Abd ar-Rahman's (1995) data collection *Tuni Merg - Death Crematorium* and the two ground-breaking books by Human Rights Watch, *Genocide in Iraq* (1993) and *Bureaucracy of Repression* (1994), were then the only examples of systematic research on the Anfal events. *Genocide in Iraq* has been translated into Kurdish three times<sup>2</sup> and has become the standard reference point for other local and international publications.

Since the fall of the Baath regime in 2003, local Kurdish publications have increased steadily. A variety of personal Anfal testimonies has been published by Kurdish politicians,

**2** *Genocide in Iraq* has been published in Kurdish language, translated by Siyamend Muftizade (Middle East Watch/Human Rights Watch, 1999) and Jemal Mirza 'Ezîz (Middle East Watch/Human Rights Watch, 2000). There is a third translation by Mohammed Hama Tawfiq that has not been authorized by Human Rights Watch, but circulates in Kurdistan-Iraq.

former resistance fighters and male civilian survivors (Mehmud, 2002-2004; Serkani, 2009). To my knowledge, no such biographical texts have been published by women survivors, apart from Mahabad Qaradaghi's (2010) personal report about her detention prior to Anfal, which touches only marginally upon the Anfal experience. Academic publications on the topic have likewise increased, many of them supported by the Ministry of Martyrs and Anfal Affairs, which is in turn interested in underpinning Kurdish claims for international recognition of Anfal as genocide. Most of these publications are based on quantitative studies and deliver statistics on victims and destroyed villages (Dizeyi, 2001; Aziz, 2005; Mohammed, 2009); they aim to underline the genocidal dimension of Anfal (Gull, 2002). They rarely address the survivors' situation in the aftermath of Anfal, nor do they reflect the latter's own views or testimonies. Arif Qurbany's four volumes of *Witnesses of Anfal* (2002 to 2007) based on narrative interviews with eyewitnesses remain the exception.

The concentration on »victimhood« literature in Kurdistan is undoubtedly a response to the hitherto lack of international attention to the Kurdish plight and, at the same time, an expression of the significance of Anfal for the current Kurdish national struggle for autonomy and political power. Growing inner-Kurdish opposition and the development of independent media have more recently enabled critical voices on the current situation of Anfal survivors to enter the public debate (see for example the magazine *Anfalistan*, edited by Omar Muhammad) and young researchers to tackle sensitive issues such as Mohammed Azadeen Sadradeen's research on how the impunity enjoyed by Kurdish collaborators affects Anfal survivors.<sup>3</sup> Additional research that embeds Anfal in broader sociological and political discourses has more recently been added by a new generation of young

**3** I met Mohammed Azadeen Sadradeen in Sulaimania in October 2012 to talk about his research, which was based on qualitative interviews with Anfal survivors, but not yet finished at that time.

Kurdish researchers in the diaspora (see for example Lana Askari's work on memorial sites in Iraqi Kurdistan).<sup>4</sup>

On the Iraqi national level, Anfal remains unaddressed both in the media and in academic publications. The silence on Anfal is an expression of on-going conflict and mistrust among the various population groups and the competition between victims' groups.

The number of international publications on the subject is limited to what can be considered an inner circle of long-standing Anfal researchers who regularly meet at international conferences. Some of them work on the political background and impact of Anfal and the poison gas attack on Halabja (Hiltermann, 2007), others on the perception and political exploitation of Anfal in Kurdish society and Kurdish politics (Fischer-Tahir, 2012). More recently Anfal has been addressed in the context of international law and transitional justice (see Fazil Moradi's research project at the Max Planck Institute in Halle).<sup>5</sup>

Some articles have specifically addressed the situation of Anfal survivors from a psychological trauma perspective. Ahmad et al. (2000) have published results of a quantitative study (partly done in Sumud/Rizgary) on trauma in children survivors and diagnose 87 per cent of the interviewed children and 60 per cent of their caregivers as suffering from PTSD. Daloye (2008) found PTSD prevalence in 144 women Anfal survivors, based on the Davidson-PTSD questionnaire. Both studies are based exclusively on quantitative methods and a clinical PTSD framework. To address Anfal survivors' suffering, Daloye (2008, p. 173) recommends »cognitive therapy combined with exposure, imaginable exposure therapy, psychoeducation and vivo exposure therapy«, Ahmad (2008, p. 222) advocates for »both professional help and political efforts to find out the truth and obtain redress«.

<sup>4</sup> See Askari, 2012.

<sup>5</sup> See <http://www.eth.mpg.de/cms/de/people/d/moradi/project.html>. Last accessed March 2013.

Drawing instead on a contextualized trauma concept, I have myself focused on the psychological situation of Anfal women in the 1990s in my diploma dissertation (Mlodoch, 2000) and several subsequent publications (Mlodoch, 2006, 2011, 2012a, 2012b).

Adalat Omar (2010)<sup>6</sup> and Choman Hardi (2011) have presented comprehensive studies of the specific experience of women Anfal survivors during and after Anfal; they, too, touched on psychological aspects.

The study presented here is the first long-term research on women Anfal survivors from an explicit psychological trauma perspective. It is also the first study that places the issue of women Anfal survivors in the larger context of strategies for dealing with the past in post-Baath Iraq.

### *Conceptual frame*

The psychological concept of trauma is a key concept in my research. It is not my intention, however, to identify individual trauma symptoms in women Anfal survivors. Maintaining a critical stance on the clinical and, in my view, reductionist concept of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), I draw instead on a politically and socially contextualized trauma concept, as first discussed in response to the *extreme situation* (e.g. Bettelheim, 1943) experienced by Holocaust survivors and further developed in the 1990s in the work with victims of political violence in Latin America (e.g. Martín-Baró, 1990; Becker, 1992) and with women victims of gendered and political violence (e.g. Herman, 1992). Within the abundant literature from research and work with victims of extreme violence, I refer specifically to the impact of disappearances for the relatives of the miss-

**6** Results of Adalat Omar's research were presented at the 3rd International Conference on Mass Graves, Erbil, April 2011.

ing (e.g. Kordon et. al., 1988; Lagos et al, 1994, Boss, 2006; Preitler, 2006).

To counterbalance the victimizing tendencies when approaching survivors of violence through the trauma perspective, I pursue agency-focused approaches as developed in Critical Psychology (Holzkamp, 1985) and draw on concepts of empowerment as developed in community psychology (Keupp & Zaumseil, 1978) and resource-oriented approaches in psychotherapy (for example Reddemann, 2001). Indeed, my work with Anfal women and the discovery of the immense strength under the surface of their socially defined role as victims taught me the importance of focusing on their resources and the stabilizing factors in their lives rather than focusing on the trauma itself. The constant tension between victimhood and agency that Anfal women struggle with is a common thread throughout my thesis.

Relating to this framework my research shows the long-term destructive impact of violence on Anfal women's individual lives and social structures and pays particular attention to their specific grief caused by the uncertainty about the fate of their missing relatives. It explores how, in the aftermath of Anfal, political, economic, social and traditional and patriarchal gender concepts perpetuated their suffering. It highlights how instead certainty on the fate of the missing and political and economic stabilization after the downfall on the Baath-regime in 2003 helped them to recover and reconstruct their social and family structures.

While in psychological research and practice we are currently witnessing an increasing focus on neurobiological approaches to trauma and - in consequence - on individual short-term and »quick-impact« therapies, my research reconfirms the social and political embeddedness of trauma. The example of Anfal women foregrounds the importance of a stable and secure economic, social and political environment for the coping process and advocates for integrated long-term gender-sensitive assistance projects that combine therapeutic approaches with political and human rights ac-

tivities for social justice and better life conditions for survivors of violence.

By exploring the collective dimension of Anfal women's narratives and drawing attention to the conflicts and contrast between the women's memories and narratives and their public representation in regional and national discourses, the study links the psychological trauma debate to interdisciplinary debates on collective memory and adds to psychological attempts to grasp the collective dimension of trauma (LaCapra, 2001; Volkan, 2006; Kühner, 2008).

Finally, my study addresses the importance of truth, justice and social and political acknowledgement for the women's coping process and the alienating impact of the delay in addressing these needs on both the Iraqi national and the Kurdish regional level. It highlights the persistent tension between the women's individual and collective coping processes and institutional processes of dealing with the past. It thus adds a psychological perspective to the broader debate on political reconciliation processes in societies recovering from conflict and war.

### *Structure*

What follows takes the reader to a journey through more than twenty years of a group of Anfal women's lives. The study is structured along various perspectives: biographical, along categories and on a time axes.

Chapter 2 of the study outlines the theoretical framework, and details my understanding of the core concepts trauma, memory and reconciliation.

Chapter 3 is dedicated to the historical, political and social context relevant to understanding Anfal women's situation over the last decades.

Chapter 4 details my personal access to women Anfal survivors and introduces the methodological framework and operationalization of the research.

Chapter 5 introduces the research location and the key persons of the research.

Chapter 6 focuses on Anfal women's narrations of their Anfal experience and discusses the trauma-protective function of their collectively shared narratives.

Chapter 7 to 11 depict the lives of Anfal women from 1988 to 2003: the years of repression between 1988 and 1991 (chapter 7), the agonizing impact of uncertainty about the fate of their missing relatives (chapter 8), and the social, political and economic constraints as well as the traditional and patriarchal gender concepts that perpetuated their suffering (chapter 9). Chapter 10 is devoted to the resources and strengths Anfal women mobilized to survive and raise their children despite all constraints. This is followed by a summary of their situation from 1988 to 2003 in Chapter 11.

Chapter 12 to 16 deal with the changes, that occurred after the downfall of the Baath regime in 2003.

Chapter 12 discusses the tension between Anfal women's desire for evidence and justice and the transitional justice process undertaken on the Iraqi national level.

Chapter 13 describes the role of Anfal in the Kurdish regional public discourse after 2003 and the representation of Anfal women in the Kurdish national victimhood narrative, which conflicts with their own experiences and needs.

Chapter 14 illustrates the socio-economic changes in Anfal women's lives after 2003 and their efforts to reconstruct family structures and social practices; it likewise shows how the reconstruction of social networks along traditional patterns tends to erode the women's collective structure.

Chapter 15 discusses how the socio-economic and political changes affect the women's situation and coping strategies, and how - in a changing context - their memories, narratives and claims transform and challenge regional and national victim discourses.

Chapter 16 sheds light on Anfal women's ongoing struggle between victimhood and agency and discusses practical working experiences from the Anfal Women Memorial Forum Project in Rizgary.

Chapter 17, ultimately, summarizes my research findings and discusses the conclusions.

The research for this book was completed in 2013. More recent developments in Iraq such as the brutal advance of the »Islamic State« terror militias into parts of Iraq in 2014, could not be addressed. The current front line between IS militias and Kurdish *peshmerga* fighting them lies in the immediate neighbourhood of Sumud/Rizgary. The Anfal women described in this study are once again facing political instability and conflict, which adds yet another layer of violence to their lives. Once again they have to bury sons and other relatives killed in the fighting. Once again their memories of extreme violence are stirred up and blend with new pain and grief. At the same time, thousands of Sunni Arab families are escaping from the fighting areas and seeking refuge in the Germyan region. Anfal women find themselves torn between their resentment towards the displaced families who for them represent the former perpetrator group, on the one hand and feelings of compassion, on the other. Once again Anfal women meet and try to find collective responses, consoling each other, supporting the Kurdish struggles against the »Islamic State«, and engaging in neighbourly aid to women among the displaced



## 2 Conceptual framework

My research on women Anfal survivors touches upon three conceptual realms - trauma, memory and reconciliation. It shows the long lasting impact of extreme violence and loss on the women's psychological state and social lives and the extent to which their suffering and coping strategies have been shaped by social, political and economic factors and gender roles in the traditional society of the Germyan region. It thus contributes to a politically and socially contextualized and gendered trauma concept. It explores the interwoven character of the women's individual and collective memories and narrations and their transformation through the social, economic and political changes in Iraq and Kurdistan over the last twenty years and outlines how the women's individual and group narratives on Anfal contrast and conflict with political narratives and victimhood discourses on Anfal at both the Kurdistan regional and the Iraqi national level. Here my research links the psychological trauma discourse to concepts of *collective memory* and *collective trauma* in sociology, anthropology and cultural studies. It ultimately addresses the tensions between the women's claims for truth, justice, reparations and political acknowledgement, on the one hand, and the current political strategies of addressing past crimes in Kurdistan and Iraq, on the other. It contributes to the larger sociological and political debate on political reconciliation from a psychological perspective. Certainly all three conceptual realms I touch upon are vast and »booming« fields of research and marked by multiple and often controversial notions and debates.

Given the inflationary use of the above mentioned concepts not only in psychology, but increasingly also other disciplines such as anthropology, historiography and cultural and literary studies, in the following I will roughly delineate the psychological concepts and debates relevant to conceptually framing and situating my research.

## 2.1 Trauma - a contested concept

### *The inflationary use of the trauma concept*

The concept of psychological trauma is highly contested. Its ambiguity begins with its use as a definition for a violent event or experience and at the same time as a description of the psychological impact of such an event on an individual, group or society. An event cannot be defined per se as traumatic detached from its specific perception by the affected person and his or her subjective reaction to it. Similarly, a subjective reaction cannot be considered traumatic isolated from a violent event or shock. Trauma is therefore marked by the relationship between an external event and a specific individual response to it (Fischer & Riedesser, 2009). Following Lorenzer (1966), I use the term *traumatic experience* to describe this subjective perception of an objective event.

The notion of trauma has massively entered media debates and public discourse since the mid-1990s and has seen inflationary use ever since. Today, media coverage of natural disasters, plane crashes, hostage taking or armed conflict rarely takes place without a commentary from a television trauma expert on the long-term consequences for the survivors, the relatives of the victims and the rescue personnel. This excessive use of the term trauma feigns empathy with those who suffer. However, it levels incomparable experiences, thereby decontextualizing trauma as a concrete experience of suffering and rendering it trivial. Today the use of the trauma term is commonplace. People say that they are traumatized by a failed exam or the end of a relation-

ship. Moreover, the habitual tele-diagnosis of whole populations affected by war and conflict as traumatized suggests that personal experience of violence automatically leads to psychological disorders, stigmatizing those concerned in the process.<sup>7</sup>

On the academic level, the psychological trauma concept has gradually found its way into the discourse in cultural and literary studies and even historiography. Here it is frequently used in the metaphorical sense to characterize historical ruptures or cultural and literary representations of suffering, and occasionally in a quasi mystical sense to grapple with the *uncanny* or the *unspeakable* (Caruth, 1995). Such use of the trauma concept is often disconnected from concrete personal experience of suffering and tends to erode the notion of trauma as a useful analytical concept.

Given the ambivalence of the trauma concept itself, its inflationary use and its propensity to trivialize or mystify suffering, I found myself at odds with the notion itself at various points of my research and considered abandoning it altogether and instead referring to alternative concepts such as *social suffering*, developed by Arthur Kleinman and Veena Das (Kleinman et al., 1997). Discussing my doubts with Professor Ottomeyer, he argued that, while blurred in the academic discourse, the specificity of trauma becomes immediately apparent in the practical work with survivors of violence. Indeed, in my own practical working context with Anfal survivors, the trauma concept proved to be an important category for understanding the specific dynamics and lasting impact of extreme violence and loss on individuals, social structures and the survivor community.

**7** As Ottomeyer (2011) points out, compassion and understanding for victims of conflict in distant places is finite and ceases abruptly when they seek asylum and assistance in Europe.

*The social and political brisance of trauma*

Trauma is an overwhelming experience of shock and a violent rupture in the stream of a person's life. Trauma is the experience of powerlessness and the victim's loss of control over his or her physical and psychological functions (Herman, 1992). It not only destroys the psychological and physical integrity of the victims, but also shatters their assumptions about the world and themselves. Trauma deactivates the victims' social networks and their awareness of belonging to a system of relationships, values and meanings.<sup>8</sup> Judith Herman (1992, p. 33) describes trauma as the »affliction of the powerless«.

Trauma is not solely a psychological, academic or therapeutic concept. It is a political and moral issue, a provocative concept of political and social explosiveness because it deals by definition with the impact of outside events on the individual (Lennertz, 2006). To deal with trauma means to approach the latent fragility of human existence, which is constantly threatened by unforeseeable catastrophes and the dark side of human nature: extreme violence and war. »To study psychological trauma means bearing witness to horrible events« and »has lead repeatedly into realms of the unthinkable and foundered on fundamental questions of belief« (Herman 1992, p.7). »Extreme traumatization,« says Klaus Ottomeyer (2011, p. 87; the author's translation from

**8** Fischer and Riedesser (2009, p. 84) define trauma as »a vital experience of discrepancy between threatening situational factors and individual coping capacities, accompanied by feelings of helplessness and defenceless exposure and creating an enduring blow to concepts of the self and the world« (the author's translation from the German). There are also other psycho-economic definitions of trauma that describe it as an experience that utterly overwhelms the individual's normal ability to deal with shock, stress or loss: »In economic terms, the trauma is characterized by an overwhelming flood of stimuli that exceeds the subject's tolerance and his or her capacity to process these stimuli« (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1999, p. 513, the author's translation from the German).

the German) »is a nightmare that became reality and deeply shatters our trust in the world, when we get in touch with it.«

The concept of psychological trauma has been highly contested since German neurologist Hermann Oppenheim (1889) first introduced the originally medical term to describe the physical and psychological reactions of survivors of railway accidents in England in his book *The Traumatic Neuroses*. Historically, the development of the concept of psychological trauma is closely related to social and political change, with phases of »episodic amnesia« (Herman 1992, p. 7). Pierre Janet, Sigmund Freud and Joseph Breuer came under enormous social pressure towards the end of the nineteenth century when they contended that traumatic childhood experiences of premature sexual seduction and sexual abuse were at the origin of *hysteria* in adult women, hitherto considered malingerers (Janet, 1894; Breuer & Freud, 1895; Freud, 1896). Their early ground-breaking studies of memory phenomena such as the *dissociation* of traumatic memories and their persistent *somatic representation* and *deferred activation* after periods of *latency* were rejected by the academic community of the day, since the assumption of widespread sexual and domestic violence against women constituted a social scandal and challenged the prevailing concepts of family and society (Venzlaff et al., 2004, p.10). Whereas Janet was marginalized in the academic community for his insistence on the presence of real experiences of sexual violence as the background to the phenomena of hysteria, Freud later saw them as fantasies and imaginary acts (*seduction theory* - German: *Verführungstheorie*). The debate on whether this shift in interpretation was the result of new insights or social and political pressure is on-going (Herman, 1992; Lennertz, 2006; Venzlaff et al., 2004, pp. 10-11; Schriefers, 2008).

The next waves of trauma research and trauma debate emerged with the First and Second World War, when psychologists and physicians were confronted with soldiers suffering from severe physical and mental disorders as a result of their war experience. Trauma research was then primarily dominated by military psychiatrists and the political inter-

est in finding quick solutions that would make it possible to redeploy the concerned soldiers, commonly discredited as cowards and *Kriegszitterer*.<sup>9</sup> Accordingly, approaches to trauma from these periods concentrated on discovering effective short-term therapies to cure the symptoms. With the end of the respective wars, the debate ceased to exist (Herman, 1992; Schriefers, 2008).

The experience of the Holocaust, the unimaginable *break of civilization* (Diner, 1996),<sup>10</sup> generated rich and multi-layered research on trauma among Holocaust survivors, though only after a period of shock, denial and silence in the 1950s and early 1960s. Today trauma is closely associated with the Holocaust (Lennertz, 2006). Psychoanalyst Bruno Bettelheim, himself a survivor of the concentration camp in Auschwitz, defined the prolonged experience of violence, humiliation and death in the camp as an *extreme situation* (Bettelheim, 1943). Later the term *extreme traumatization* was introduced to describe the experience of victims and survivors of massive man-made violence and to convey its incomparable nature (see e.g. Grubrich-Simitis, 1979; Becker & Calderon, 1992). The Freudian concepts of *latency* and *deferred action* were confirmed in research on Holocaust survivors, who often developed severe symptoms of trauma triggered by events that occurred long after their release from the concentration camps. In his work on Jewish orphans who survived the Holocaust by hiding in foster families in the Netherlands, Hans Keilson (1979) was the first to emphasize the strong correlation between the development of traumatic symptoms and post-trauma social and political realities. He developed the concept of *sequential traumatization*.

**9** The literal translation of *Kriegszitterer* is »those who tremble in face of war«. The English translation »shell-shock sufferer« does not fully convey the disdain expressed by the German term.

**10** Dan Diner's use of the term »break of civilization« refers less to the dimension of systematic violence exerted by the Nazi regime to persecute and annihilate the Jews than to the associated general breakdown of ontological certainty and trust in the limits to human nature's capacity for evil.

Further research was carried out on the transgenerational passing down of trauma to second- and third-generation survivors (Bergmann et al., 1995; Kogan, 1996, 1998; Bar-On & Chaitin, 2001) and on the impact of trauma and suffering on the constitution and self-definition of the nation state of Israel (LaCapra, 2001).

### *The PTSD concept - achievements and curse*

In the 1970s, the anti-Vietnam-war movement in the United States produced a fresh wave of trauma research and debate. US soldiers who had returned from Vietnam physically and psychologically devastated by the war scratched the heroic image of the American soldier. Painful reminders of the colossal American defeat in Vietnam, they were marginalized in their own society. Vietnam War Veteran associations fought for social and political acknowledgement of the trauma the soldiers had suffered and their qualification for pension schemes. It was in response to their claims that finally, in 1980, Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) found entrance into the DSM III (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders) as a clinical syndrome, subsumed under anxiety disorders (American Psychiatric Association, 1980). In 1992, PTSD was included in the ICD-10 (International Classification of Diseases) Manual of the World Health Organization (WHO, 1992). The concept of PTSD is based for the most part on stress-oriented trauma research and defines a series of events, such as violence, sudden loss, accidents, natural disasters or sexual abuse, as *traumatic stressors* that overburden the individual's capacity to cope with stress. The PTSD diagnosis relies on the presence of identifiable symptoms: the avoidance of trauma-related stimuli with parallel intrusive symptoms such as nightmares, flashbacks and obtrusive images, as well as sleep disorder, irritability, anxiety, nervousness and lack of concentration.

Apart from all critical aspects of the PTSD concept, its ground-breaking historical achievement was the finally wide-

spread recognition of external events as etiological agents for psychological disorder. For the victims and survivors of violence, this represented significant progress in terms of recognition of their suffering. Up to the 1980s, Holocaust survivors in Germany were obliged to undergo humiliating procedures to prove that their psychological problems had effectively begun with their detention in concentration camps and were not rooted in genetic dispositions or pre-war family issues. Kurt Eissler's (1963) essay, entitled *Die Ermordung von wie vielen seiner Kinder muss ein Mensch symptomfrei ertragen können, um eine normale Konstitution zu haben?* (English: The murder of how many of his children must a person be able to bear without developing symptoms, in order to be recognized as having a normal (psychological) constitution?) became a metaphor for the denial of the massive and long-term psychological consequences of the Holocaust and – more generally – of violence and war in post-war Germany.

The classification of PTSD as a clinical syndrome paved the way for survivors of violence to qualify for treatment, pensions and compensation and to take legal action. Today, for asylum seekers fleeing to Europe and the USA from war and conflict situations, the PTSD diagnosis is useful when it comes to taking legal action to gain asylum and prevent deportation to their country of origin (see e.g. Rafailović, 2005; Bundesweite Arbeitsgemeinschaft der psychosozialen Zentren für Flüchtlinge und Folteropfer, 2006). In Germany the growing number of PTSD diagnoses in German soldiers returning from military deployment in Afghanistan has recently led to heated public and parliamentary debates on the moral and political legitimacy of Germany's military presence in Afghanistan, demonstrating once again the close link between political debate and trauma discourse.<sup>11</sup>

**11** See for example: »Afghanistan im Kopf«. In: DIE ZEIT, 2 Feb. 2009; »Afghanistan-Einsatz: Zahl deutscher Soldaten mit Trauma steigt dramatisch«. In: SPIEGEL ONLINE, 3 Feb. 2009

Nonetheless, the PTSD concept has been the subject of biting criticism in the psychoanalytically oriented trauma literature and among practitioners working therapeutically with victims of political and gender-based violence. The principal bone of contention is the concept's tendency to reduce the complex impact of violence to a catalogue of standardized symptoms, to subsume such incomparable experiences as accidents and man-made torture under *traumatic stressors*, and thus to decontextualize and depoliticize violence and its impact. It has been criticized for its concentration on individual symptoms and its neglect of social and political dimensions of suffering. Critics moreover maintain that the PTSD concept medicalizes and pathologizes »normal reactions to an abnormal situation«<sup>12</sup> and as such stigmatizes the victims. In 1997, medico international published a collection of critical voices on the PTSD-concept under the title of *Rapid Deployment Force »Soul«*, and thus contributed to a critical trauma debate in Germany (medico international, 1997).

Since the 1990s, the PTSD paradigm and attendant therapeutic approaches to victims of violence have become an essential component of US and European humanitarian aid and development interventions in societies recovering from the impact of war, conflict and mass violence. Practitioners, however, found PTSD inadequate for explaining the specific impact of political and mass violence and developing services to support the survivors (medico international, 1997 and 2005; Weine & Chae, 2008). They also criticized the export of Western individualistic therapy approaches and their imposition on conflict situations worldwide for ignoring concepts of suffering and strategies of coping specific to the

**12** The phrase goes back to Viktor Frankl (1982), psychiatrist and Holocaust survivor. In his report on survival in the Nazi concentration camps written in 1945 *Und trotzdem Ja zum Leben sagen. Ein Psychologe erlebt das Konzentrationslager*, he says: »In an abnormal situation an abnormal reaction is normal behaviour« (Frankl 1982, p. 30, the author's translation from the German).

cultures concerned. Radical critics like David Becker and Derek Summerfield see the PTSD concept as a »Western« invention. They deplore the growth of a global »trauma industry«, the attendant »help business« and the mushrooming of psychosocial counselling activities that ultimately serve to depoliticize violence and conflict and to individualize its victims (Becker, 1997, 2007; Summerfield, 1997, 2001).

*The impact of political violence - psycho-social trauma or socio-political traumatization processes*

I concur with the critique of the PTSD concept outlined above. My own research is situated in a context of extreme political violence, deliberately used against a group of people in order to torment, humiliate and annihilate them and accompanied by legitimating strategies of devaluation. Women Anfal survivors have gone through multiple experiences of violence and loss during Anfal and have suffered from additional political, social and gender-based violence in the aftermath. The clinical PTSD concept falls short in grasping the complex nature of their traumatic experiences, on the one hand, and the multiple influence of socio-economic, political and gender conditions in the aftermath on their suffering and coping, on the other. It is not my research interest to investigate clinical trauma symptoms in individual women Anfal survivors. Instead, I demonstrate the complex interweaving between their individual suffering and their life circumstances. I draw on and contribute to a socially, politically and culturally contextualized trauma concept as developed in work with victims of extreme political violence in other contexts: in research and therapeutic work with Holocaust survivors (for example Keilson, 1979; Grubrich-Simitis, 1979; Laub, 1992; Bar-On, 1995), with victims of political violence in Latin America (Kordon et al., 1988; Becker, 1992; Lagos et al., 1994) and South Africa (Hamber, 2009), with victims of gender-based violence and sexual abuse (Herman, 1992) and in psychosocial assistance projects in various contexts (medico international, 1997 and

2005). I also draw on discussions and publications within the International Trauma Research Net.<sup>13</sup> Various terms have been used to describe the specific impact of political, gender-based and thus man-made violence: *extreme traumatization*, *complex traumatization* and *political traumatization*. Based on his work with victims of torture, detention and disappearance in El Salvador, Ignacio Martín-Baró (1990) developed the concept of *psycho-social trauma*; David Becker and his colleagues working with ex-detainees and relatives of missing persons in Chile proposed the concept of *socio-political traumatization processes* (German: Sozialpolitische Traumatisierungsprozesse) (Becker, 1992). Judith Herman (1992) offered a comprehensive, contextualized approach to violence and its social impact in her landmark book *Trauma and Recovery*, based on psychoanalytical and feminist theory and Herman's extensive practical work with victims of political terror, gender-based violence and child abuse.

All these concepts refer for the most part to psychoanalytical theory. They define trauma not purely as an individual but also as a social and political experience, and underline its processual character. They make a sharp distinction between an experience of shock following natural disasters or accidents, on the one hand, and the experience of man-made violence, on the other. They highlight the specific victim-perpetrator relation in experiences of man-made violence and

**13** The International Trauma Research Net goes back to the International Study Group on Trauma, Violence and Genocide founded by Dori Laub in 1996. It gathered researchers and practitioners in the field of man-made violence and its impact and aimed to promote exchange and networking. The Network published several readers, organized three international conferences and published a newsletter in the web (<http://traumaresearch.his-online.de>). Unfortunately, the Network terminated its work in December 2007. The Network had been a forum of academic and professional exchange for further developing a socio-political perspective on trauma – an endeavour that one badly misses in today's psychological debate.

its long-term impact on the victim's psyche.<sup>14</sup> They stress the social, political and cultural embeddedness of the violent experience as well as the close correlation between individual coping strategies and the prevailing socio-economic and political realities and gender roles in the aftermath.

In psychological and psychotherapeutic praxis, this contextualized understanding of trauma translates into integrative assistance approaches that combine individual therapy and counselling for victims of violence with educational, economic and development assistance.

It also prompts psychologists and psychotherapist to engage in broader human rights and political issues and to work towards changing and stabilizing the life conditions of survivors of violence. Psychologists, who assisted relatives of disappeared in Argentina, actively engaged in the struggle for justice and accountability of the perpetrators (Kordon et al., 1988; Schmolze & Rauchfuss, 2009); European psychotherapists and counselling centres assisting victims of torture and violence seeking asylum in Europe find themselves struggling against hostile asylum laws in their efforts to gain secure life conditions for their clients (Peltzer et al., 1995; Ottomeyer, 2011).

### *The neurobiological turn – confrontation or stabilization*

With the recent »neurobiological turn« in psychological research, however, a disturbing tendency to decontextualize and individualize trauma looms large. Based on brain research findings, approaches such as *Narrative Exposure Therapy* (NET), which was developed at the University of Constance (Schauer et al., 2005), focus on individual short-term and quick-impact trauma therapies. The authors hold

**14** Referring to the 2006 earthquake in Turkey where the impact of natural disaster was intensified by the structural insufficiencies of buildings and state services, however, Vamik Volkan (2006) shows that the boundary between natural disaster and political violence can be blurred.

that intense and repetitive confrontation with the traumatic experience fosters its integration in the narrative memory and as such »heals« the trauma. They downplay the importance of stabilizing a trauma victim before confronting him or her with the traumatic situation (Neuner, 2008) and the significance of economic and socio-political factors for the coping process. Furthermore, they export standardized therapies to various contexts of organized violence, regardless of the prevailing social, political and cultural conditions (Schauer, 2008).<sup>15</sup>

Against this background, my research on women Anfal survivors in Iraq accentuates once again the need for a socio-political and gender-sensitive perspective on trauma and, relatedly, a psychosocial praxis that combines therapeutic aspects with human rights and political engagement.

### *Trauma, agency and resilience*

Approaching an individual or group from the trauma perspective always runs the risk of centring on their suffering and thus further labelling them victims and disempowering them. To counterbalance these tendencies, I draw on subject-centred concepts of agency as developed in the school of Critical Psychology (Holzkamp, 1985). Drawing on *activity theory* as developed in Soviet Psychology (Leontiev, 1978, 1981; Vygotsky, 1962, 1978), Critical Psychology defines agency as the very process of relating to the outside world and puts it in the focus of psychological research; it emphasizes that the individual, who is on one hand conditioned by and, on the other hand, produces the outside world, always has a range of actions to choose from. Indeed, my work with Anfal women has taught me that, however desperate their situation was, they never ceased to struggle against the ad-

**15** For a critical review of NET see Mundt et al., 2011; Ottomeyer, 2011.

verse conditions and found many creative ways of coping with their experience of violence, loss and marginalization.

There is a widespread assumption that those who have undergone the experience of extreme violence and loss must be traumatized in the psychological sense. It is beyond dispute that no one survives what the Anfal women went through, for example, without retaining deep psychological scars; at the same time, this does not mean, that the women have automatically developed symptoms that qualify as traumatic or lead to traumatization.<sup>16</sup> Individual reactions to violence are manifold and, as already indicated, shaped to a greater extent by personal resilience and social conditions after the event than by the nature and degree of the violence experienced (Keilson, 1979). In what follows I will avoid applying the term *traumatized* to women Anfal survivors. I will instead describe their manifold and complex individual and collective response to the suffered violence.

Psychological research on *resources* and *resilience* has increased since the 1990s. Both terms are defined as the balance between a person's strengths and potential, on the one hand, and their vulnerability, on the other. Resilience is more commonly used in relation to individual/personal dispositions and resistance; the term resources is used in a more comprehensive sense to signify the social, economic and political factors that reinforce the recovery process. Stable and affectionate family bonds and social ties as well as self-confidence and social competency have been evaluated as primary resilience factors, as have intelligence and emotional intelligence (Bonanno, 2004). In Luise Reddemann's (2001) approach, imagination and creativity are powerful sources of strength. Aaron Antonovsky's (1979) model of *salutogenesis* underlines the protective impact of the individual's *sense of coherence*, based on *comprehensibility*,

**16** Epidemiological research shows that 25-40 per cent of survivors of violence in post-conflict situations show symptoms of traumatic responses (Beristain, 2006; Hamber, 2009).

*manageability* and *meaningfulness*. Beyond these individual resilience factors, physical and economic security, stable social networks and the existence of empathic listeners and trusted people in the environment can foster recovery, and social and political acknowledgement of the suffered violence adds to the survivor's ability to cope. I contribute to this discourse by outlining the strong influence of external factors on the suffering of Anfal women and their coping capacities. Throughout my research and practical work, it has been one of my core concerns not to look at women Anfal survivors from a deficit perspective, but instead to focus on their resources, strengths and capacities and thus regard them as - in Luise Reddemann's words - »persons who are always more than their trauma«.

## **2.2 Individual trauma symptoms**

Although political violence is frequently a shared experience, it remains primarily an individual and lonely experience for each single victim. Across the different trauma concepts and schools, there is general agreement on a series of key individual-level symptoms and dynamics that are necessary to define a response to stress and suffering as traumatic.

### *Avoidance and intrusion - the central dialectic of trauma*

Judith Herman (1992, p.1) describes »the conflict between the will to deny horrible events and the will to proclaim them aloud« as the »central dialectic of psychological trauma«. The contrasting tendencies of avoidance and intrusion, and the alternating of related symptoms are considered a key dynamic in the traumatic process by both stress-oriented and psychoanalytic trauma concepts (see Horowitz, 1976, Reddemann & Sachsse, 1997). On the one hand, the affected person summons up enormous energy to avoid people, places and situations related to or reminiscent of the

traumatic situation. The repression or even complete dissociation of the memory of the traumatic event is a frequent mechanism of avoidance, but can also be interpreted as a mechanism of self-protection. On the other hand, the person is haunted by images and memories of the traumatic experience and relives it in nightmares and overwhelming flashbacks whose emotional and sensual intensity resembles that of the traumatic occurrence itself. Repressed or dissociated memories of the traumatic event can re-emerge after even long periods of latency, triggered by situations or just a smell, a gesture etc. reminiscent of the traumatic event. The unconscious persistence of traumatic memory often leads survivors to »search« for and re-enact the traumatic situation in behavioural scenes or relational patterns in a form of *compulsive repetition* (van der Kolk, 1989).

While this dialectic process of alternating symptoms of avoidance and intrusion is largely considered a tormenting trauma symptom, Reddemann and Sachsse (1997) interpret it instead as a component of the coping process and underline the protective character of dissociative processes: the individual dissociates unbearable memories until he or she is sufficiently stable to confront them.

### *The »devil inside« - the introjection of the perpetrator*

In contexts of political and gender-based - and thus man-made - violence, the act of violence is often accompanied by the perpetrators' attempt to devaluate and dehumanize the victims. In addition, the perpetrator forces the victim into a relationship of submission and at the same time physical intimacy and dependence. In a desperate attempt to survive or mitigate the aggression, victims attempt to understand and identify in part with the logic of the perpetrator and internalize the latter's devaluating perception of themselves. This complex perpetrator/victim relationship leaves a long-lasting imprint on the victim's psyche, an »alien body« or »inner devil«, which Sándor Ferenczi (1933) defined as the

*introjection of the aggressor* or the implantation of *perpetrator introjects* (German: *Täter-Introjekte*). Ferenczi drew on his work with children abused by close relatives, who tend to feel responsible for having caused the aggression or »deserved« it. Taking the responsibility seems more bearable than accepting the evil of a person of trust they depend on. Thus, paradoxically, the suffered violence turns into intense guilt feelings in the victim (Hirsch, 2000).<sup>17</sup>

### *Guilt*

Guilt is a prominent and complex feeling in survivors of man-made violence. Apart from the above mentioned diffuse self-blame implanted by the introjections of the perpetrator, survivors of violence tend to feel guilty about their failure to have done the »right« thing to prevent or mitigate the violence they suffered or, in the case of a collectively shared experience such as mass detention, to have protected their relatives, friends and co-prisoners. William G. Niederland (1968) has introduced the notion of *survivor guilt syndrome* to describe the feeling of guilt for having survived, while others perished, that was common among Holocaust survivors (Grubrich-Simitis, 1979); the syndrome has even found entrance into the catalogue of PTSD-symptoms (WHO, 1992).

Guilt feelings of survivors are often reinforced by their social environment's reactions in the aftermath of the suffered violence. »Blaming the victim« for alleged »wrong« behaviour is a well-known strategy to remain distant from the victims' suffering; the victims' counterparts tend to identify

**17** »Massive experiences of violence and loss leave an alien body in the self, an introjection that causes a sense of guilt. The paradox that the innocent victim (...) suffers from intense guilt, while the perpetrator neither feels nor acknowledges guilt, can be explained only by the fact that the victim vitally needs the perpetrator« (Hirsch 2000, p. 457, the author's translation).

with the »strong and victorious« perpetrator rather than with the weak victim. Across different cultural and political contexts, for example, women victims of sexual violence are frequently held responsible for having provoked the aggression. My own findings on the stigmatization of women Anfal survivors for alleged sexual and physical violence suffered during Anfal add to the abundant research in other traditional and patriarchal social contexts on female victims of violence who faced similar stigmatization (see for example Das, 2008).

However, feelings of guilt and self-blame can have a »real« background, as when victims of violence become guilty of betrayal of or aggression against others during the traumatic experience. Primo Levi's (1947) autobiographic testimony on his detention in Auschwitz, *If This Is a Man*, gives a disturbing insight into the inhuman logic of the concentration camps, where the struggle for survival led to hierarchies and aggression in the ranks of the prisoners and ultimately to what Levi describes as the dehumanization of the latter. There is a risk in the victims' counterparts' reactions, including eventual psychotherapists, of easily subsuming guilt feelings in victims of violence as an element of the dynamics of trauma and to overlook a possible genuine portion of responsibility and guilt on the part of the survivor, who feels tormented by it (Ottomeyer, 2011).

### *Shame*

Shame is another prominent feeling in survivors of violence; it is frequently related to a diffuse sense of personal responsibility for the violence they experienced (»Why me?«). Feelings of shame are particularly strong in victims of sexual violence (Herman, 1992) and sexualized torture (Becker 1992). Perpetrators use sexualized violence deliberately to violate the sense of honour and shame that prevails in traditional and more religious communities, as in the case of the mass

rape of Bosnian Muslim women by Serbian soldiers between 1992 and 1995 (Mirvic-Rogge, 2005).<sup>18</sup>

Shame is an emotion that is particularly shaped by cultural, social and religious values and thus greatly differs across the various contexts. As my work will show, in the traditional patriarchal context of the Iraqi Kurdish rural society, sexuality and the body are taboo issues. Women's experience of physical and sexual violence is not only met with silence, but also turns as social stigma against the very women who suffered it, thereby intensifying their sense of shame.

### *Shattered assumptions*

Experiences of massive violence not only destroy the victims' psychological and physical integrity, but also their assumptions about themselves and the world. Their belief in a meaningful and benevolent world and a basically good social order are deeply shattered as well as their trust in their own invulnerability, *self-efficacy* (German: *Selbstwirksamkeit*) and self-worth (Janoff-Bulmann, 1992). Survivors of extreme violence feel homeless, cut off from the normal stream of life and from others. Jean Améry, who survived Nazi concentration camps in Auschwitz, Buchenwald and Bergen-Belsen, wrote in *At the Mind's Limits* in 1965:

Whoever has succumbed to torture can no longer feel at home in the world. The shame of destruction cannot be erased. Trust in the world (...) cannot be regained. That one's fellow man was experienced as the anti-man remains in the tortured person as accumulated horror. It blocks the view into a world in which the principle of hope rules (Améry, 1986 [1965], p. 40).

**18** Jasmila Žbanić's prizewinning film *Grbavica - Esmā's Secret* (2005) gives a disturbing insight into the relationship between a Bosnian mother and her daughter who was born out of rape by a Serbian soldier, and shows the destructive power of the violence experienced and the subsequent social stigma and silence.

Based on his extensive work with Holocaust survivors, psychoanalyst Dori Laub sees the destruction of the inner representation of a social other as one of the central experiences of trauma. He consequently points out the vital need of survivors of violence, in the aftermath, to reconstruct the social other with counterparts who empathically listen to and assume the role of witness to the survivor's experience. In their book *Testimony. Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, Dori Laub and literary scholar Shoshana Felman examine the nature and function of testimony and stress the importance of finding a »living voice« and of verbalizing the allegedly unspeakable experience of the Holocaust (Felman & Laub, 1992) in the survivors' coping process.

### *Revenge*

The experience of massive man-made violence is characterized by an overwhelming sense of subjugation, helplessness and powerlessness (Herman, 1992). In a situation of detention, torture or rape, the perpetrator has unlimited power over the victim. This loss of control over physical and psychological reactions haunts the victim in the aftermath and can lead to an enduring sense of powerlessness in the face of challenges in ordinary life. Feelings of guilt alternate with fantasies of revenge. From classical literature and music to contemporary hero or vigilante justice films, revenge is a prominent motif in cultural representations of conflict. In the psychological literature, however, comparatively little attention has been given to feelings and fantasies of revenge in the wake of trauma. Judith Herman (1992) describes them as the wish to overcome - at least in imagination - the sense of powerlessness felt during the violence. The social acceptance of revenge varies in different cultural contexts, but is socially sanctioned in most as a negative and destructive

feeling.<sup>19</sup> In most therapeutic approaches, it is understood as an immature feeling that must be overcome and transformed into a more »civilized« search for justice. Others argue against such normative perspectives on revenge feelings (Reemtsma, 2002) and stress the importance of social and therapeutic spaces to express these feelings (Hamber & Wilson, 2002).

### *Mourning*

Traumatic situations are life-threatening. The victims feel close to their own death and/or witness the death of others, often close relatives and beloved persons. Hence trauma is strongly linked to mourning. In most of the trauma literature, going through a process of mourning is seen as crucial to processing a traumatic experience.

Mourning processes are marked by several phases: after an initial phase of shock and denial, the loss is gradually accepted as real. The mourning process leads a person through grief and phases of delving into the past to acceptance of a symbolic representation of the person lost and reintegration into the present.<sup>20</sup> For survivors of organized violence and often multiple losses, the process of mourning is complicated, disturbed and prolonged by the sheer quantity, sudden-

**19** As I will illustrate later, the concept of revenge enjoys greater social acceptance in Iraqi society than in most of Europe and translates into a mostly retributive concept of justice and punishment as, for example, in the tribunals against Saddam Hussein and his followers after the regime change in 2003.

**20** Attachment theorist John Bowlby (1980) distinguishes four phases of mourning: 1. shock and numbness, 2. yearning and searching, 3. disorientation and disorganization and 4. reorganization and resolution. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross (1969) describes five stages of grief: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance, which can overlap. And Theresa Rando (1984) introduces the six Rs of mourning: recognize the loss, react emotionally, re-collect and re-experience the lost relationship, relinquish the lost person and ultimately readjust to the daily life and reinvest in present and future.

ness, injustice and incomprehensibility of the losses. It can develop into melancholia and depression (Freud, 1917) and into what is defined as *pathological, abnormal, complicated* or *traumatic grief* (Kogan, 2011).

Prolonged and disturbed mourning processes are specific to relatives of disappeared persons, as in the case of women Anfal survivors in Iraqi Kurdistan. The specific impact of uncertain and ambiguous losses will be outlined in more detail in Chapter 8.

In the psychological trauma debate, the dynamics of mourning refers not only to the loss of a person, but metaphorically to the loss of hope, of assumptions about a good world and social other, and the loss of dignity and self-worth. It is considered a vital landmark in trauma therapy when victims begin to acknowledge the pain and damages they suffered and to mourn for what they lost: a peaceful family life or - in case of victims of childhood abuse - a protected childhood and youth.

### 2.3 Trauma memories - trauma narratives

Like trauma, memory is a booming category of research. Memory studies are blossoming throughout various disciplines of human and social sciences, cultural and literary studies and even historiography. Being a realm at the interface of social and natural sciences, memory research and debate have been accelerated also by recent progress in the neurosciences and related insights into how our brain stores and selects memories. David Berliner (2005) has pointed at the »danger of over-extension« of the notion of memory and the increasing tendency of its entanglement with notions of identity and culture. Though not discussing memory discourses in detail, in the following I briefly delineate those notions of individual and *collective memory* that are relevant to my research and present findings on the specificity of traumatic memory.

### *Memory – a social category*

Beyond its individual function, memory is both a social activity and a social category. Memory activity is never simply a recollection of the past; it is a dialectical process of remembering and forgetting; what we remember and what we forget hinges on our current perspective, needs and interests. Memory activity is hence a permanent process of re-construction, reinterpretation and transformation of the past from a perspective in the present. It is shaped by socio-political and economic factors as well as gender and cultural patterns. By reconstructing our past experiences we become – in the words of Pierre Bourdieu (2000, p. 52) – »ideologists of our own lives«. Reconstruction of the past is discursive; it occurs in narratives.

The sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1950) introduced the concept of *collective memory* and gave prominence to the dialectic between individual and collective memories. Social psychologists use terms such as *conversational*, *social and collective remembering* (Middleton & Edwards, 1990) or *memory talk* (Nelson, 2006) to highlight the interactional character of individual remembering. Jan and Aleida Assmann (Assmann, J., 1992; Assmann, A., 1999) distinguished between memories constructed in interaction between subjects – *communicative memory* – and symbolized and ceremonialized memories such as myths and commemorations – *cultural memory*. Social psychologist Harald Welzer (2001) added the category of *social memory* to distinguish unintentional remembering through daily social practices. And social anthropologist Paul Connerton (1989) developed the category of *habitual memory* as a part of social memory to describe the inscription of societal memory into bodily practices, ritual performances and habits.

My analysis of Anfal women's narrations from different time periods calls attention to the communicative character of memory and the intertwining of individual and collective memories, as well as their continuous transformation as a result of changes in their social realities.

*Traumatic memory*

As outlined above, traumatic experiences impact heavily on the structure of memory and the individual's capacity to remember. Likewise, the dialectic of trauma, the oscillation between between avoidance and intrusion, is largely a memory phenomenon. Parts of the traumatic memory may be suppressed or even dissociated; they persist unconsciously and return episodically in flashbacks, nightmares or somatic representations – like bodily imprints of the traumatic event. Sigmund Freud and Joseph Breuer (1895) referred to conversions of psychological arousal into physical symptoms as memory symbols (German: Erinnerungssymbole). And Besel van der Kolk (1994) writes, »The body keeps the score«. These memories exist merely as fragments and are not accessible to narrative or autobiographical memory.

Recent progress in neurobiological research has produced insights into the chemical and biological processes that underlie memory phenomena and indicates that memories of shock and violence are indeed processed differently from other memories. They are stored in the limbic system, that is, in the sensomotoric, visual and affective memory. Hyperarousal in the traumatic situation and the attendant elevated release of stress hormones hinder the memories' transfer to the neocortex and consequently their cognitive evaluation and semantic presentation. Thus, traumatic memory is encoded not as a narrative but as an affect. This explains the vividness and intensity of intrusive trauma memories in flashbacks. Interestingly, neurobiological research largely confirms the early psychoanalytical and primarily assumptive conceptualizations of traumatic memory phenomena by Janet, Breuer and Freud (van der Kolk, 1994, 2006).

Traumatic memory is fragmented and disrupted memory. Unprocessed fragments of traumatic memory embody what Ottomeyer (2011) describes as »eingeklemmtes Leben« – snagged or trapped life; they are bits of the past that protrude into the present. They are of uncanny timelessness and intensity. Indeed, many African cultures perceive trau-

matic memories as inextricably bound up with beliefs in restless ghosts and spirits of ancestors and the dead (see Boia, 1997; Merk, 2006).

*The unspeakable – mystifications of traumatic memory*

This uncanny inaccessibility of traumatic memory inspired countless literary works on the ghostly presence of a traumatic past, from Shakespeare's Hamlet to Toni Morrison's work on slavery and contemporary Argentinian authors who use the ghost story genre to symbolize the unresolved issue of disappearance.<sup>21</sup> Jan Philipp Reemtsma (1996, p. 10) referred to ghost stories as »literary representations of trauma«.

Traumatic memory is repeatedly referred to as *the unspeakable* and is sometimes seen as offering access to an unprocessed and therefore more authentic historical truth (see e.g. Caruth, 1995, 1996). These metaphors have been criticized, however, for legitimizing the blanket of silence laid over traumatic experiences. Holocaust survivor Ruth Klüger (1994) considered the mystification of the Holocaust as the unspeakable to be an alibi for the refusal to face its brutal reality.

Like all memory, traumatic memory is not static. From a psychological perspective, the reconstruction of fragmented traumatic memory, its transformation into a tellable narrative and thus the integration of the violent experience into their biographies is a major step for survivors on the path to coping with a violent past (Herman, 1992). The reconstruction of a meaningful trauma narration lies at the core

**21** See Silvana Mandolessi's research project: The Spectral Politics of Memory in Contemporary Argentinean Novel at the University of Constance: <http://www.litwiss.uni-konstanz.de/en/fachgruppen/kulturtheoriekulturwissenschaft/methoden/erc-narratives-of-terror-and-disappearance/people/detailpage/mandolessi-silvana-1396/23799/23557/> (last accessed 1 April 2013).

of most trauma therapy approaches (ibid.). My research shows, how – beyond any therapeutic setting and in a communicative process – women Anfal survivors wove constantly transforming trauma narratives, which took on a trauma-protective function. The reconstruction of traumatic memory, once again, greatly depends on external factors such as a stable and safe environment and empathic counterparts.

## **2.4 Can a collective suffer? Approaches to the notion of »collective trauma«**

The term *collective trauma* is frequently used in the psychological debate, as well as in social and cultural sciences and historiography, to define the social and political dynamics that succeed massive violence. While it seems obvious at first sight that a violent experience shared by a group of people will have a traumatic impact on the entire fabric of society, from a psychological point of view the notion of collective trauma is as yet very sparsely conceptualized. There is no evidence on the way individual psychological mechanisms occurring after an experience of extreme violence and loss might be transferred to a social body, a collective or even a nation. In the following I present a number of different approaches to grasp the collective dimension of trauma.

### *Contagious emotions – vicarious traumatization*

Generally speaking, emotions are contagious and individuals react to the suffering of others with emotions of their own. The notion of *indirect traumatization* describes traumatic symptoms in direct witnesses to traumatic events. The term *vicarious traumatization* has been used for the development of mechanisms and emotions similar to traumatic symptoms in medical, psychological and rescue personnel who deal professionally with those suffering from trauma and shock (Pross, 2009).

### *Transgenerational traumatization*

Much work has been done on how traumatic experiences of individuals are »passed down« to or impact on other family members and subsequent generations. Research ranges from Karl Mannheim's (1964) and Aleida Assmann's (2002) considerations on *generational memory* to the more specific and extensive research on the transgenerational impact of the Holocaust experience, both on victim groups and perpetrator societies (Bergmann et al., 1995; Kogan, 1996, 1998; Bohleber, 1996; Bar-On, 2004). It illustrates, however, the difference in substance between the direct experience of a violent event and its representations and dynamics in subsequent generations. Although the offspring of Holocaust survivors often suffers from traumatic symptoms or tends to re-enact traumatic scenes experienced by their parents or grandparents, this cannot simply be explained as a »trauma transmission«. It can also be interpreted as a consequence of the grandparents' and parents' difficulties of dealing with their own traumatic memories that might translate into a wary and depressive family atmosphere and overprotective or emotionally detached relations within the family context.

### *The collective use of trauma - chosen trauma*

Research has also been carried out on how large groups, societies or even nations refer to traumatic memories and narratives as constituent elements of the group identity. Combining historiographical research with elements of psychoanalysis, Dominick LaCapra (2001) has explored how the Holocaust narrative became a founding constituent of the state of Israel and explains the seemingly unsolvable conflict between Israelis and Palestinians with the powerful references to the contrasting historical traumas underlying the group identities of both sides.

Similarly, Vamik Volkan (2006) examines the exploitation of historical traumata for political and national aims and de-

velops the concept of *chosen trauma*. Referring to the example of Milosevic's use of the Serbian defeat in the Battle of Kosovo against the Ottoman Empire in 1389 to stir up anti-Muslim resentment among Serbians and prepare them for the forthcoming aggression against Bosnian Muslims in the 1990s, he demonstrates the political instrumentalization of trauma and its mental and emotional presentations independent of and centuries after any concrete or personal experience of suffering.<sup>22</sup>

### *Conceptualization of a collective or social psyche*

Sigmund Freud was the first to draw broader analogies between individual psychological processes, traumata and neuroses, on the one hand, and collective and cultural dynamics, on the other, in *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur* (1930) – (literal translation: *The Uneasiness in Culture*)<sup>23</sup> – and in *Moses and Monotheism* (1939). He himself described his considerations as »speculative«, but his works unfolded »great interpretative power« (Bloom, quoted from Windt, 2006, p. 3) and inspired later works such as *Die Unfähigkeit zu trauern*, Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich's (1967, English: *The Inability to Mourn*) ground-breaking analysis of the post-Nazi development of German society.<sup>24</sup> Ethno-psychoanalysts like Paul Parin, Goldy Parin-Matthèy and Fritz Morgenthaler (1963, 1971) and Mario Erdheim (1982) used psychoanalytical categories for comparative social and cultural studies and understood culture as »society's uncon-

**22** Volkan describes this mechanism of political exploitation not merely of traumatic experiences but also of triumphs – *chosen glories* that can be mobilized for political and national purposes.

**23** The title of the English edition is *Civilization and its Discontents*.

**24** The title of Margarete and Alexander Mitscherlich's analysis of collective behaviour in German society after 1945 does not refer to Germans' inability to mourn the loss of lives, but rather the loss of the »Führer« figure and thus the loss of their own ego ideal.

scious«. While these works are fascinating pieces of cultural criticism, they provide little evidence about how individual psychological processes and mechanisms are transferred to the collective level.

Jeffrey Alexander developed the theory of *cultural trauma* from the sociological and social constructionist perspective and fostered the rapid advance of the trauma concept in cultural and literary studies, as mentioned earlier. He states that »cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways« (Alexander et al., 2004, p. 1). In Alexander's concept, trauma is a discursive attribution rather than a genuine experience. A group or a number of powerful actors »decide« that a certain experience of suffering is relevant to their collective identity and create a cultural trauma narrative.

With her book *Trauma and Collective Memory*, the German psychologist Angela Kühner (2008) meticulously examined a number of approaches to the conceptualization of collective trauma in psychological trauma discourse as well as in interdisciplinary memory and identity discourses. She suggests a clear distinction between experienced trauma on the one hand and its social, cultural and political articulations and representations on the other. To grasp the collective dimension of trauma she introduces the use of terms such as *symbol-mediated trauma* or *collectively communicated trauma* instead of the disguising term *collective trauma*.

In what follows, I will not use the term *collective trauma*. Instead, I examine the intertwinement between individual and collectively shared trauma narrations of women Anfal survivors, on the one hand, and their representation, appropriation and instrumentalization in the social, cultural and political discourse in Kurdistan and Iraq, on the other hand. I will thus clearly differentiate between the different levels of individual, group and national/political trauma narratives and rather show the interdependencies and conflicts

between them. I will ultimately show how distorted representations of the individual trauma experience in national victimhood discourses impact negatively on Anfal women's coping strategies.

## 2.5 The political and social dimensions of trauma

While I am sceptical about the notion of collective trauma, my research adds to the abundant evidence on the social and political dimension of trauma in the realm of a contextualized psychological trauma research and practice. It also relates to the concept of *social suffering* developed by Arthur Kleinman, Veena Das and Margaret Lock (1997), which looks into the social consequences of violence and human suffering from an interdisciplinary perspective and emphasizes the importance of reconstructing social relations and textures in the wake of violence.

### *Trauma - social stigma and distinction*

The traumatic experience of violence is often directly related to changes in the social realities of the victims. They may lose their jobs and their property; families may lose their breadwinners. In situations of mass violence against ethnic, political or religious groups, physical aggression is closely linked to destruction of the economic and social structures of the target groups, as in the case of the Anfal operations in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Victims of massive violence tend to live in social isolation in the aftermath. As a result of their experience, they feel »cut off« from the social fabric and »different from others«. This inner isolation is reinforced if silence about the suffered violence is socially and/or politically imposed. A climate of fear and constant threat and the related silencing prolong the victims' isolation when the perpetrators remain in power. Women's experiences of sexual or bodily harm are

often socially silenced as a result of taboos in traditional, patriarchal and strongly religious communities, albeit not exclusively in such communities.

The relation between victims of extreme violence and their social environment in the aftermath of the suffered violence is highly complicated. Klaus Ottomeyer (2011, p. 91) remarked, that »traumatized individuals are an imposition on the psyche of others« (the author's translation from the German). They are living symbols of a threatening past. While victims long for an empathic listener, their social counterparts often react to their testimonies with incredulity and denial. Primo Levi describes a recurring nightmare of prisoners in Auschwitz:

They would return home, tell a close person with passion and relief about their sufferings and would see that they were not believed, indeed, even not listened to. In the most typical (and most cruel) version, the addressed person turned away and went off without a word (Levi, 1995, quoted from Ottomeyer, 2011, p. 90, the author's translation from the German).

Indeed, numerous victims of massive violence are not only not listened to or believed, they are avoided. Their abyssal experience poses a threat to the social other's sense of security. When instead the »traumatized« are awarded special attention or services and their trauma acquires a sense of social distinction or privilege, they can become the object of social envy (Ottomeyer, 2011).

### *Societal, political and institutional responses to trauma*

There is a wealth of psychological research and literature on how individual coping strategies of victims of violence interdepend on the socio-economic conditions present in the aftermath of violence and the social and political responses to their anguish and pain. While the aforementioned dynamics of social silencing and avoidance prolong and reinforce the trauma, the opportunity to speak out, the existence of em-

pathic counterparts, solid social and family networks, and social and political acknowledgement of the ordeal are factors that have proved helpful in coping with the traumatic experience. Perpetrator impunity leaves survivors of violence restless, creates tormenting feelings of vengefulness, anger and humiliation and intensifies the victims' perception of the perpetrators' omnipotence; but punishment of the perpetrators, guilt acknowledgements and apologies can, on the other hand, help victims to cope and achieve a certain repose (Kordon et al., 1988; Kordon, 1991; Schmolze & Rauchfuss, 2009). Memorials, ceremonies and other cultural representations serve as symbols of historical and political acknowledgement of the traumatic experience and thus help survivors of violence to reintegrate into their current lives (Preitler, 2006); Hamber and Wilson (2002) attribute to such symbols a function of *symbolic closure*, as well. This is of particular significance to relatives of the disappeared, who go through prolonged and unsolvable processes of mourning. I will, however, refrain from using the term *closure*, which is closely related to ideas of *healing* and *coming to terms with the past*. The example of women Anfal survivors shows instead their rejection of the idea of »overcoming« suffering and the consoling aspects of keeping their relation to the dead and »keeping faith« with their trauma.

## 2.6 Political reconciliation and transitional justice

By showing the interweavement of Anfal women's individual coping strategies with societal and political discourses on Anfal and institutional strategies of dealing with the past in Iraq and Kurdistan, my research links also to another conceptual realm: the broad political and sociological debate on *political reconciliation or post-conflict transformation* and the associated practices of *post-conflict peace-building*. All of these terms describe political, societal and institutional strategies of addressing the specific problems of transformation processes in societies that have gone through war,

conflict and periods of massive violence or even genocide. It would far exceed the scope of my thesis to elaborate in detail the vast debate and different theoretical discourses behind these terms. In this chapter I will give a synopsis of some key elements of the debate and specifically outline the tension that exists between the political and psychological perspectives on reconciliation.

### *Reconciliation - a booming category of research*

Like trauma and memory, reconciliation has been a booming category and field of research since the 1990s. The concept is widely discussed both in academic literature on conflict transformation and among practitioners and politicians working for peace and stabilization in post-conflict societies. Political reconciliation discourses have mushroomed especially in the realm of European and US American foreign policy and international aid policy. They are driven primarily by the paramount concern to achieve security and stability and to prevent further conflict in societies after war, dictatorship and conflict. Smith (2004, quoted from Bloomfield, 2006, p. 5) reported that in 2004 activities related to peace-building and conflict prevention ranked third in the categories of donor support, behind political development and socio-economic assistance and ahead of security.

Political reconciliation discourses are closely associated with discourses of *nation-building* and *democratization* following a Western model of democracy and the rule of law. They are therefore highly political, ideological and morality-laden (Hamber & Kelly, 2004).

David Bloomfield points out the enormous terminological confusion surrounding the debate on *political reconciliation* and the variety of definitions involving psychological, political, national, sociological and even theological concepts. He sums up that »reconciliation's basic problem is that no one agrees how to define it or do it« (Bloomfield, 2006, p. 4).

The 2003 International Handbook on *Reconciliation after Violent Conflict* of the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) defines reconciliation as *the* »process through which a society moves from a divided past to a shared future« (quoted from Bloomfield, 2006, p. 7). This process can, however, be looked at on various levels: on a macro-level as a set of institutional and political tools for establishing security, the rule of law and social peace to a previously conflict- and war-ridden society; on a relational level as the process of restoring social relationships in a disrupted and fractured environment; and on a more psychological level as the process of healing the wounds of victims of violence by establishing processes of accountability and trust-building between former victims and perpetrators.

Bloomfield (2006) proposes to regard reconciliation as an umbrella concept embracing the various political, relational and individual levels of transitional processes. Brandon Hamber and Gráinne Kelly (2004) describe five interwoven strands to be involved in a societal reconciliation process: developing a shared vision of a fair society, acknowledging and dealing with the past, building positive relationships, cultural and attitudinal change and substantial social, economic and political change (Hamber & Kelly, 2004, pp. 3-4).

### *Transitional justice*

There is an underlying assumption in political reconciliation discourse that a society failing to address past violence and human rights violations leaves something »unresolved« that will lead to further violence and conflict in the future. It is assumed that »lack of attention to the past will undermine even the best democracy« (Bloomfield, 2006, p. 9).

Drawing on experiences in Argentina and Chile, where amnesty and impunity for former military juntas have caused persistent social conflict, general agreement has been reached that some form of perpetrator accountability for past crimes is a precondition for social peace. Consequently, *transitional*

*justice* is a core concept in the political reconciliation debate and is often used even as an equivalent of a broad range of reconciliation measures.

Within the field of transitional justice, *retributive justice* concepts and the more reconciliatory approach of *restorative justice* can be distinguished. The retributive justice concept focuses on the accountability of perpetrators and thus the judicial prosecution and sentencing of perpetrators, often accompanied by vetting and lustration processes, that is, by the removal of former perpetrators from administrative and political structures.

The de-Nazification process in post-war Germany after 1945, which focused on the Nuremberg Trials to sentence the main perpetrators and on a large lustration process, is the most renowned historical example of a retributive justice concept. The instalment of the United Nations International Criminal Tribunals for Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia and the setting up of the permanent International Criminal Court in The Hague to prosecute individuals for human rights violations, war crimes and genocide can be seen as part of this tradition. Sierra Leone and Cambodia are current examples of the establishment of so-called Hybrid Criminal Courts, in which both domestic and international actors sentence perpetrators.

However, concepts of retributive justice are often severely criticized for their policy of dealing with a mere handful of prominent perpetrators, neglecting social reconciliation processes and thus fuelling fresh conflict. The US-influenced transitional government in power in Iraq after 2003 adhered for the most part with the retributive justice model. It sentenced leading representatives of the Baath regime and implemented extensive de-Baathification processes. It was harshly attacked for its practice of »victors'« justice and considered to have paved the way for fresh outbursts of violent conflict (see Chapters 3.5 and 12).

The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) is the most renowned example of the alternative *restorative justice* approach. Truth and the Christian concept of *forgiveness* were at the heart of the TRC and embodied by its

chair, Archbishop Desmond Tutu. Victims of violence under the apartheid regime were invited to present their testimonies in public hearings; perpetrators who gave a full account of their crimes and evidence on the fate of their victims were permitted to request amnesty from criminal prosecution. There is an abundance of publications evaluating the impact of the TRC (see Merk et al., 1998; Hamber, 2009). There is no doubt about the historical importance of the TRC for South Africa's transition process and for fostering a large societal debate on past crimes, violence and its consequences. The TRC has, however, been criticized for its principle of trading punishment for truth and as such, social peace for justice. Perpetrator impunity remains a burning issue in South African society, as survivors of violence struggle to bring the perpetrators to justice to this day (Merk, 2006; Hamber, 2009). It has also been criticized for focussing solely on episodes of physical violence and not touching economic injustices and inequalities, which continue to divide South African society to this day.

Truth Commissions or Truth and Reconciliation Commissions have meanwhile been set up in more than thirty countries. They replace criminal trials, as in South Africa, or operate in combination with criminal prosecution, as in Sierra Leone (for an overview, see Schmolze, 2009).

The controversy between restorative and retributive justice concepts marks one of the core debates in the field of transitional justice: *the peace vs. justice* or *truth vs. justice* debate (Fischer, 2011). However, the concept is not limited to the sheer accountability of perpetrators of human rights violations and crimes. It includes a broader range of measures such as institutional and legal reforms for rebuilding security, the rule of law and trust in the system. Reparations for victims of past crimes and more symbolic forms of acknowledgement of their suffering, such as apologies from the perpetrators and the institution of remembrance ceremonies and memorial sites are also part of the »toolbox«. Some concepts also address economic injustices and add development activities to the set of measures required for a transitional justice process.

*Individual needs of survivors of violence versus political reconciliation*

In many transitional justice and reconciliation discourses, *healing* is an important component. Sometimes healing is meant in a very concrete sense: establishing psychological and psychosocial assistance projects for victims of past crimes and violence. More generally, however, it is assumed that the transitional justice process itself, the establishment of truth and the accountability of perpetrators, will have a healing impact on individual victims of past crimes and violence. An analogy is drawn between political and societal processes of reconciliation and the individual coping processes of victims of violence with their traumatic past. Indeed, much of the vocabulary used in the transitional justice and reconciliation debate comes originally from the psychological context, such as »processing the past« (Bloomfield, 2006), and is transposed to a political level. In South Africa, for example, the TRC was publicly announced as a tool to *heal the nation* (Hamber & Wilson, 2002). Hamber and Wilson (2002) criticize this act of »psychologizing the nation«, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the assumption that political reconciliation processes and individual coping processes with trauma are equivalent or concurrent. They stress instead that victims of extreme violence are often »out of step« (Hamber, 2009, p.76) with collective and political processes of dealing with the past.

Indeed there is an inherent tension between the requirements and constraints of national and political reconciliation processes, on the one hand, and the individual needs and expectations of the survivors of past crimes, on the other. Political reconciliation processes are challenged to accomplish the balancing act between addressing a violent past and opening up the prospect of a more peaceful future. They must seek a compromise between perpetrator accountability and the need to include perpetrators and their social reference groups in future political processes. They must set social and political processes in motion that include both victims and perpetra-

tors as agents. They are obliged to negotiate between justice and social peace and find a balance between forgetting and remembering. This they must do within a clearly defined timeline and institutional framework in order to avoid an endless protrusion of the conflictive past into the present.

The vital needs of victims and survivors of extreme violence and their legitimate and pressing demands for justice and the accountability of perpetrators are often at variance with the political desire to »come to terms« with the past and obtain social peace and stability. Victims of violence do not seek »closure«. They have close bonds to the past and the dead and they have to deal with their grief and suffering for the rest of their lives. The highly normative terminology of *reconciliation*, *forgiveness* or *coming to terms with the past* that accompanies political reconciliation strategies puts enormous pressure on the victims who have to deal with the impact of violence, have no alternative to remembering and might never be ready to reconcile but simply to coexist (Hamber & Wilson, 2002, Bloomfield, 2006; Hamber, 2009).

In the political debate on reconciliation processes, the survivors' perspective has been marginalized to a great extent. Healing is a component of most reconciliation packages, but is understood as the introduction of individual therapeutic and psychosocial assistance projects for the victims. Most Truth Commissions and Criminal Tribunals provide psychological support for victims who testify. On the whole, however, political reconciliation strategies neglect the aforementioned tensions between reconciliation efforts and individual trauma recovery. South African psychologist Brandon Hamber (2009) and the International Conflict Research Institute (INCORE) at the University of Ulster, Northern Ireland<sup>25</sup> have recently carried out conceptual and practical work to link psychological and political perspectives on transitional processes in the wake of violence and conflict. I hope to contribute to this effort with my work.

25 See <http://www.incore.ulst.ac.uk>.

### **3 Historical, political and social context**

My research covers a period of more than twenty years, from 1988 to the present day, during which Iraqi and Kurdish societies have seen radical political, social and economic transformation, three wars and a change of regime. A detailed historiographical and political analysis of the two decades would exceed the scope of this thesis.

The following chapter will outline the developments and present contextual data crucial to understanding women Anfal survivors' experience of violence and their social realities in the aftermath. First I trace some of the main characteristics of the Baath regime across three decades. This helps to explain how the genocidal Anfal campaign against the Kurds could come about and how violence progressed to become a key element of Iraqi politics, leaving an indelible imprint on Iraqi society. I then summarize the precarious socio-political and economic reality of Iraqi Kurdistan from the 1990s to 2003 that shaped the lives of Anfal survivors and their coping strategies in the wake of violence and loss. Finally, I highlight the radical changes that occurred in Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan after the fall of the Baath regime in 2003 and the institutional and political framework Anfal survivors relate to and still struggle with today.

### 3.1 Iraq under the Baath regime - welfare, control and punishment<sup>26</sup>

#### *The Baath Party's scramble for power in Iraq*

The Baath Party seized power in Iraq for the first time in 1963 in a military coup that violently overthrew the government of Abd al-Karim Qasim. At that time, the Baath Party was a small group founded in 1952 parallel to the Syrian Baath Party and ideologically based on a blend of Pan-Arab Nationalism and elements of socialism. The Baath Party's first appearance was marked by the extreme use of violence against political opponents, particularly communists.

It is impossible to establish how many people were killed, but thousands were arrested, and sports grounds were turned into makeshift prisons to hold the flood of detainees. People were killed in the streets, tortured to death in prison and executed after mock »trials« (Farouk-Sluglett & Sluglett, 1987, p. 86).

This first Baathist reign ended after only ten months. On 17 July 1968, however, the Baath Party once again seized power; this time Saddam Hussein took the stage as President Hassan al-Bakr's right-hand man and head of the security services. The coup hallmarked the beginning of thirty-five years of Baath dictatorship in Iraq that would only cease with the US-led invasion of 2003 and the subsequent demise of Saddam Hussein and the Baath regime.

Ever since General Abd al-Karim Qasim overthrew the monarchy in 1958, the Revolutionary Command Council had been a key political structure. Now, the constitution of 1968

**26** For general features of the Baath regime, I refer largely to Marion Farouk-Sluglett and Peter Sluglett's (1987) timeless socio-economic analysis *Iraq since 1958. From Revolution to Dictatorship* and two programmatic books by Samir al Khalil alias Kanan Makiya, *Republic of Fear. The Politics of Modern Iraq* (1989) and *Cruelty and Silence. War, Tyranny, Uprising and the Arab World* (1993).

established it as the supreme legislative and executive power, accountable exclusively to the Baath Party. General Hassan al-Bakr became both President and Prime Minister of Iraq and, at the same time, Chairman of the Revolutionary Command Council. The Baath Party became the single centre of power in Iraq (Farouk-Sluglett & Sluglett, 1987). In subsequent years, the Baath government based its power primarily on three pillars:

- A process of rapid economic development and modernization and the introduction of government services reminiscent of a welfare state and based on nationalization of the oil industry
- The establishment of a meticulous system of control and its pervasion of social and family structures
- Repression and extreme terror in dealing with political opponents.

#### *Dependence - welfare and state supplies*

Iraq is in possession of the world's second-largest oil reserves. In 1972, the Baath regime nationalized the oil industry. Vast oil revenues enabled the regime to invest heavily in the extension and modernization of the country's infrastructure and social welfare services, addressing the social and economic expectations of the population (Farouk-Sluglett & Sluglett, 1987). Oil revenues were invested in the construction sector, in infrastructure and in prestige projects such as dams, irrigation systems, production facilities and road networks. The Iraqi construction sector and the middle class were the beneficiaries of these modernization projects. The Baath regime put a modern face on Iraq, propagated an anti-tribal and anti-feudal policy, and implemented an extensive land reform that expropriated big landowners and distributed parcels of land to small farmers (Fischer-Tahir, 1996).

Food, rents and energy were subsidized, while free health and education systems with multiple social services, such as preschools, were established. The 1971 reform of the

employment law saw the institution of maternity and youth protection schemes. Old-age pension systems were likewise introduced. Under the Baath regime, large segments of the Iraqi population experienced full employment, social security and a relatively high standard of living compared with neighbouring countries.

The reverse side of this welfare system, however, was the increasing dependence of large swaths of Iraqi society on government supplies. The entire construction industry relied on government contracts for large-scale infrastructural projects. With 660,000 Iraqis employed in government services and another 200,000 in the army in 1980, the administrative apparatus was overblown. The massive import of consumer goods acted as a damper on productive handicrafts. Agriculture and the productive sectors stagnated, leading to rural flight and processes of urbanization. In 1980, the rural population of Iraq dropped by more than 10 per cent to a mere 31 per cent of the total population (compared to 42.2 per cent in 1970) (Farouk-Sluglett & Sluglett, 1987, p. 246).

### *Fear – the spread of violence and terror*

From the outset, the Baath Party launched a wave of violence and terror against a broad spectrum of groups and individuals perceived as political opponents and began

(...) what was to become its all too familiar practice of combining a campaign of terror with blandishments of various kinds and assurances of its ultimate good faith. At this stage, it hit out quite indiscriminately at both »right« and »left«, and Communists, Nasserists, Pro-Syrian Baathists, former ministers and ex-officials, and »spies« were rounded up. Some were so maltreated in prison that they died there or soon after their release, while others were executed, often in public, for their alleged participation in plots against the regime, or for crimes they were supposed to have committed in the past (...) the atmosphere of indiscriminate terror familiar to Iraqis from the Baath's previous

campaign in 1963 soon returned, with raids on private houses in the middle of the night and gangs of armed thugs roaming the streets. (Farouk-Sluglett & Sluglett, 1987, p. 118).

The terror was openly legitimized by the constant »discovery of conspiracies« and confessions of »spies« broadcast on television to every household in the country. Their subsequent executions were staged as public events for the masses. In 1969, hundreds of thousands of Iraqis attended the public execution of fourteen men accused of spying for Israel, nine of whom were Jewish (al-Khalil, 1989, p. 51-52; Farouk-Sluglett & Sluglett, 1987, p. 121).

With such spectacularly violent events based on constructed allegations and directed against those defined by the Baath Party as ideological enemies, the regime set out to mobilize the masses in its own interests and to hold them at bay in a diffuse climate of fear. The regime set up a meticulous system of control that would develop into what Human Rights Watch was later to call a »bureaucracy of repression«, referring to the policy of violence against Iraqi Kurds (Human Rights Watch, 1994). Iraqis were under the constant control of a fine-spun web of multiple intelligence and security services and militia forces, some of which were supervised by Saddam Hussein personally.

Hundreds of thousands of Iraqis were employed in the country's repressive structures. The execution of violence was by no means confined to the security organs or control bodies. Nor was it restricted to hidden torture chambers. Acts of cruelty were instead openly staged as official and well documented procedures. Deserters from the Army for example were punished by ear amputations that were performed in hospitals and presented as »clean« surgical interventions, with physicians and medical staff as accomplices.<sup>27</sup>

**27** During the 1990s, several physicians who had been forced to carry out amputations fled to the then Kurdish-controlled north of Iraq, where they

Characteristic of the Baath regime was not merely its capacity to control all areas of Iraqi society, but also its ability to drive major sections of the population into active complicity in its policy of violence and terror. In the introduction to his book *Republic of Fear*, Kanan Makiya remarks:

The special problem of Baathi violence begins with the realization that hundreds of thousands of perfectly ordinary people are implicated in it (al-Khalil, 1989, p. xvii).

### *Control – the Baathification of Iraqi society*

The combination of welfare and terror kept the Iraqi population in a state of dependence and fear and allowed the Baath Party to permeate Iraqi society. The party gradually took control of political and public life, advancing step by step into the private sphere of the Iraqi people. Workers unions, women's associations and political organizations were banned and replaced by Baath Party mass organizations, e.g., the General Union of Women, the General Union of Farmers and Baathist Student Unions in schools and universities.

Children were integrated in mass organizations from an early age:

Primary school children are organized in the Pioneers; boys and girls between the ages of ten and fifteen in the Vanguard (tala'i'a); and youth between fifteen and twenty in the Youth Organization (futuwwa) [...] Most Iraqi youth were passing through the youth organizations. Members take oaths, wear uniforms and are organized in a hierarchy, that resembles that of the Baath Party (al-Khalil, 1989, pp. 76-77).

gave testimony. In 1993/1994, I had several conversations with INC members in Erbil who confirmed these atrocities. See also van der Stoep (1994):

Membership in these organizations or the Baath Party itself – the latter achievable only through a series of exams and recommendations – was the prerequisite for a political career or government job, a professional career, access to university or a construction contract award. In 1968, Baath Party members numbered approximately one thousand. Kanan Makiya cites a Baath statistic from 1984, which points to 25,000 full members and 1.5 million active party supporters (14.4 per cent of the Iraqi population) (al-Khalil, 1989, p. 39).

Expansion of the party apparatus and its mass organizations facilitated the ideological and organizational binding of the population to the party and at the same time paved the way for control of society as a whole. Members were coerced into writing regular reports (*taqrir*) on work colleagues, co-students, neighbours and even family members should they comment negatively on the state or the party. Kanan Makiya describes *taqrir* writing as a quasi-institutionalized instrument, turning millions of Iraqis into informants:

For the system to work the truth value of a report is irrelevant. The simple fact of its existence is enough to generate the appropriate atmosphere of suspicion and fear, and to implicate with impeccable proof broad layers of people in the violence of the regime (Makiya, 1993, p. 63).

A *taqrir* indicating crucial comments about the regime could lead to the immediate arrest of the person concerned.

(...) a child under ten in a party youth group blurts out that his parents don't approve of something. The next day both parents are hauled off for »questioning«. Then there is the case of a primary school teacher glancing through the newspaper at break time in the common room. She comments on the unsuitability of Saddam Husain's [sic!] dress given his status as president. Along with the family, she disappears for two weeks without a trace. Upon returning, everything goes on as normal (al-Khalil, 1989, p. 62).

In 1977, in one of his many public speeches, Saddam Hussein outlined the importance of government control over youth and the family in particular.

To prevent the father and mother dominating the household with backwardness, we must make the small one radiate internally to expel it. Some fathers have slipped away from us for various reasons, but the small boy is still in our hands and we must transform him into an interactive radiating centre inside the family through all the hours that he spends with his parents to change their condition for the better. We also must keep him away from bad influences.

... The unity of the family must not be based on backwards concepts, but on congruence with centralizing mores that derived from the policies and traditions of the revolution in its construction of the new society. Whenever there is a conflict between the unity of the family and these mores ... it must be resolved in the favour of the new mores. (...)

You must surround adults through their sons in addition to other means. Teach the student to object to his parents if he hears them discussing state secrets and to alert them that this is not correct. Teach them to criticize their mothers and fathers respectfully if they hear them talking about organizational and party secrets. You must place in every corner a son of the revolution, with a trustworthy eye and a firm mind, that receives its instructions from the responsible centre of the revolution. ... Teach him to object, with respect, to either of his parents should he discover them wasting the state's wealth which he should let him know is dearer to him than his own; for he would not have personal property if the state did not have his wealth, and this property belongs to society .... Also teach the child at this stage to beware of the foreigner, for the latter is a pair of eyes for his country and some of them are saboteurs of the revolution. Therefore, accompanying foreigners and talking with them in the absence of known controls is forbidden. Plant in the child's soul a vigilance not to give the foreigner anything of state or party secrets. Also he must warn others, young and old alike, in a respectful way, that they should also not talk in front of foreigners .... The child

in his relationship to the teacher is like a piece of raw marble in the hands of a sculptor who has the power to impart aesthetic form, or discard the piece to the ravages of time and the vagaries of nature (al-Khalil, 1989, 77-78).

This excerpt underlines the extent to which the Baath regime pervaded the private realms of Iraqi society, legitimizing its dictatorship with a blend of paternalism and the pretence of progress and social modernization. The overall climate of fear and the enforced complicity of generations of Iraqis with the Baath regime's terror explain the uncanny silence about violent excesses and mass atrocities in Iraqi society that persist in many contexts to this day.

### *The Baathist policy on women*

The treacherously ambiguous Baath strategy of inclusion/integration and terror had its equivalent in its policy on women. From the outset, the Baath regime had endeavoured to mobilize women for the party in the interests of national goals (Fischer-Tahir, 2003). The 1970 constitution stipulated equality of men and women. Reform of the employment law saw gender equality in terms of opportunities and salaries, maternity and job protection, mandatory child-care services in the workplace and early retirement for women. By 1980, women were standing as candidates in local and parliamentary elections and education for girls was compulsory. The government had begun to implement vast literacy campaigns in 1978, reaching more than one million women and girls in the rural areas, including the Kurdish region. By the end of the 1980s, Iraq had the lowest female illiteracy rate in the Middle East region (Women for Women International, 2005; United Nations Development Fund for Women, 2005). Women had access to all kinds of professions and employment and crossed the threshold into male-dominated domains such as technical professions and executive posts in the administrative and business sectors.

In 1980, women in Iraq made up 46 per cent of teachers, 46 per cent of dentists, 70 per cent of pharmacists and 14 per cent of industrial workers (al-Khalil, 1989, p. 89; Joseph, 1991; Farouk-Sluglett, 1993).

The 1978 civil law reform was less radical. The preamble emphasizes preservation of the principles of Islamic Law, adding without further specification »only those corresponding to today's times« (al-Khalil, 1989, p. 89). The reform nevertheless strengthened the role of women in the family, banned forced marriages and traditional marriage agreements and gave women the right to divorce and to child custody. In so-called people's committees, which acted as civil law courts, two of the five members had to be women. Specific civil arbitration boards were introduced to solve disputes concerning, for example, divorce and child custody (al-Khalil, 1989).

Women's associations active prior to 1968 were systematically dissolved; the mass organization General Union of Iraqi Women became the Baath Party tool for policy enforcement among women. The Union praised Saddam Hussein and the achievements of the Baath Party in the sphere of women's affairs, including military training for women in defence of the fatherland.

A few years later, the outwardly progressive policy on women would be largely revised in favour of Saddam Hussein's appeasement policy towards tribal and religious groups during the Iran-Iraq war. However, already in the 1970s and 1980s, the propagated prototype of the well-educated and politically active Iraqi woman was thwarted by the fate of tens of thousands of persecuted, tortured, raped and murdered women among the Kurds, Shiites, political opponents and religious and ethnic minorities, sharply defining the more sinister side of the Baathist policy on women. Women in prison, for example, were systematically raped and sexually abused. It was also common practice for the Baath security forces to pressure male detainees or fugitives by arresting and torturing their female relatives.

*1979 - Saddam Hussein's coup*

During his years as Vice President and head of the repressive state apparatus, Saddam Hussein expanded his personal power basis by assigning several members of his extended family to key positions. This nepotism led even some of the Baath Party leadership to a degree of unwillingness to nominate Saddam Hussein as President al-Bakr's successor, following the latter's resignation in 1979. Hussein nevertheless emerged victorious from the power struggle and was appointed President. Almost immediately he launched a bloody campaign against his critics within the Party, justifying it with the alleged participation of several ministers and leading party cadres in a »pro-Syrian conspiracy«. The operation culminated in a show trial and the public execution of twenty-two leading Baath Party cadres, among them ministers and former close friends and confidants of Saddam Hussein, who personally carried out some of the executions (Farouk-Sluglett & Sluglett, 1987, p. 209). Saddam Hussein later informed the Iraqi people of the executions in a television address, announcing in the same breath a wage increase for all Iraqi employees.<sup>28</sup>

Saddam Hussein now had unlimited control of the party, of the state and of the apparatus of repression. With his acquisition of power, the period of ideological justification came to an end. His professed anti-tribal attitude notwithstanding, Saddam Hussein based his power first and foremost on the loyalty and support of the Sunni population in his home region of Tikrit. He assigned members of his extended family and his clan to the most influential positions, while he himself became the centre of power. He portrayed himself as the benign albeit strict patriarch, the father of the nation who tends to his people but is ready at all times to unleash draconian punishment if met with opposition. This image found expression in a personality cult that saw life-

**28** Several Kurdish families in Sulaimania told me the story in 1992.

size pictures of him inside and outside of public buildings and city entrances and his photograph in every schoolbook.

The concentration of political power in the hands of Saddam Hussein's extended family and the Sunni Arab heartland coupled with the systematic exclusion, marginalization and repression of Iraq's Shia majority population paved the way for lasting friction in Iraq between Sunni and Shia Arabs, which would become virulent after the collapse of the Baath regime in 2003.

### *1980-1988: the Iran-Iraq war*

A year after he had officially assumed power, Saddam Hussein catapulted Iraq into one of the longest and most brutal wars in recent history. On 17 September 1980, he declared the Iraq-Iran agreement on the Shatt al-Arab null and void. Some days later, Iraqi troops crossed the border into Iran. Hussein's strategy was to establish Iraq as the dominant power in the Gulf region. He had initially envisaged a blitz operation followed by a speedy military victory over Iran, which he presumed had been weakened by the Islamic Revolution in the previous year. The operation, however, turned into a bloody war that lasted eight years, caused the loss of more than a million lives on both sides and left huge areas of both countries devastated.

Already extensively controlled, Iraqi society saw yet a further increase in militarization in the course of this war (Farouk-Sluglett & Sluglett, 1987). Millions of young Iraqi men from all ethnic groups and regions were coerced into military service and sent to the front. Desertion or lack of commitment at the front was punishable by death. Women, students and children received military training in schools, at workplaces and in sport arenas. In 1979/1980, the Iraqi army totalled 190,000 soldiers. By 1988, at the end of the Iran-Iraq War, this figure had grown to a million and led to the exponential growth of the military apparatus and its concomitant industry.

The massive recruitment of Iraqi men during the war accelerated the breakdown of the productive sector and increased dependence on imported food and goods. In 1983, the Iraqi government set up the centrally organized distribution of food rations to every single Iraqi. The attendant countrywide distribution system would later become an additional web of control over people's movements and a weapon against Kurdish and Shiite resistance. By the end of the war, 500,000 Iraqi soldiers had been killed, tens of thousands were detained in Iran, and the number of female-headed households showed a dramatic increase. On 20 August 1988, Iran and Iraq signed a ceasefire agreement.

In the course of the eight years of war, the Baath regime abandoned its anti-tribal policy. Against a backdrop of immense human and economic loss and growing social unrest in Iraq, the government courted Sunni Arab tribal and religious leaders. It entered into military alliances with them and, revoking elements of previous land reforms, granted them land and privileges in exchange. Religious metaphors gradually began to permeate the war propaganda.<sup>29</sup> This appeasement policy led to major changes in the government policy on women. The image of modern working Iraqi women was progressively sidelined by that of courageous and patriotic mothers of Iraqi soldiers, mourning or waiting for the return of their heroic sons. Female judges and public prosecutors were obliged to abandon their positions; several civil law reforms, such as the ban on polygamy, were revoked (al-Jawaheri, 2008; al-Ali & Pratt, 2009).

**29** See also Ofteringer (1999a) on the use of the code word Anfal for military operations against the Kurds.

*Retaliation against Shia and Marsh Arabs*

Around this time, the regime intensified its repression and terror against internal opponents. Kurdish resistance groups in the north and Shiite groups in the south exploited the war situation to obtain support and supplies from the Iranian government. The Iraqi propaganda machine identified these groups as enemies and collaborators per se and prepared for retaliation. During the final months of the war and its immediate aftermath, Saddam Hussein thrust the weight of the inflated repressive apparatus against his »internal enemies«. Shiite revolts in the south were brutally crushed and thousands of Shiite rebels killed (Khoury, 2012). A vast drainage operation was launched in the fertile marshlands of southern Iraq, which had been largely inaccessible to the Iraqi army. It was accompanied by military raids against the Marsh Arab population, the use of napalm and chemical weapons, the assassination of village leaders and the abduction of family household heads (Fawcett & Tanner, 2002; Human Rights Watch, 2003a). Fishing grounds and water sources were poisoned. An estimated 100,000 Marsh Arabs were forced to flee their homes, many of them in the direction of Iran, while others attempted to find shelter in central Iraq.

In 1988, in the final months of the Iran-Iraq war, the Baath regime launched an operation that was to become infamous as the Anfal Campaign: a military operation aimed at annihilating thousands of villages in northern Iraq that harboured Kurdish resistance fighters. Planned well in advance, the Anfal Campaign was legitimized by the alleged collaboration of the Kurds with the war enemy, Iran.

*The ambiguous heritage of the Baath regime – contrasting interpretations*

In 1989, Kanan Makiya published his seminal work *Republic of Fear* under the pseudonym Samir al-Khalil (1989). A masterpiece between psychological profile and documentation,

the book gives an unsettling insight into the Baath policy of violence and its pervasive impact on Iraqi society. This was followed some years later by *Cruelty and Silence* (Makiya, 1993), which focuses on the massive human rights violations and genocidal crimes perpetrated by the Baath regime. Both book titles encapsulate the most striking characteristics of the regime: the combination of welfare, control and terror, which led to the complicity of large sections of the population, legitimated the use of extreme violence and culminated in massacres of the Shia and genocidal operations against the Kurds. Kanan Makiya would later become an advisor to the US government during the preliminaries to the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003. He is today at times criticized for having contributed to driving the US into war by predicting an easy overthrow of the regime and an enthusiastic welcome of the Iraqi population to the occupation troops. Ironically, some US intellectuals hold him responsible for having persuaded them to support the war.<sup>30</sup> Apart from such bizarre controversies, Kanan Makiya has also been condemned for his depiction of the Baath regime as a homogeneous apparatus, thus overlooking the multiple voices and spaces of resistance that developed in Iraq despite an omnipotent Baath regime (Rohde, 2010). Yet another point of criticism is his simplistic comparison between the Baath regime and the totalitarian systems of Nazi Germany and the Stalinist Soviet Union (Leezenberg, 1999). The uniqueness of the Nazi dictatorship and its crimes renders such a comparison, thoughtlessly voiced on many occasions by Baath regime opponents, indeed questionable. At the same time, several structural parallels can be drawn between the Baath and the Nazi regimes, notably with regard to the combination of welfare and terror, the use of terror as a political means, the bureaucratic organization of terror, the deliberate construction of »the enemy« by using anti-Semitic,

**30** See for example McKelvey, Tara. »Interventionism's Last Hold-Out«. In: *The American's Prospect*, 14 May 2007.

anti-Iranian, anti-Kurdish and later anti-Shia resentments and the transformation of millions of citizens into active accomplices of extreme violence.

The Baath regime's carrot-and-stick policy mentioned earlier, its seemingly progressive image following agricultural and civil law reforms and the initial anti-tribal policy still give rise to strikingly different interpretations of the nature of the Baath regime. These became clearly visible, for example, in the heated debates surrounding the US-led invasion in 1991 and again in 2003. While in 2002/2003 the USA and President Bush Jr. made extensive use of the Hitler-Saddam Hussein comparison to justify the US-led invasion, parts of the anti-war protesters in Europe, the USA and several Arab countries, which criticized the invasion as driven by economic interests and US hegemony, tended to downplay the regime's dictatorial character and instead promoted an image of the Baath regime as »anti-imperialist«, of Saddam Hussein as a secularist modernizer and of Iraq as granting more rights to citizens and specifically women than the neighbouring countries. As shown above, however, access to legal rights and privileges in Iraq was reserved for those loyal to the regime, while tens of thousands of men and women were persecuted, detained and killed. Furthermore, the Baath regime revised its modernizing policy and turned to Islamic and tribal rhetoric during and in the aftermath of the Iran-Iraq War to consolidate its power. For many survivors of the Baath regime's crimes it is hard to bear references to Iraq's progressive image in the 1980s without mentioning the accompanying violence.

The Baath regime's marriage of violence and modernity left Iraqi society an ambiguous and difficult legacy (Leezenberg, 1999). Not only did the use of extreme violence against large segments of the Iraqi people devastate individuals and destroy social structures across all ethnic, religious and regional groups; structural violence also seeped into the woodwork of Iraqi political and public institutions, including political and social representations of former victim communities. The recourse to violence and control as a means

of exerting political power and of conflict solution remains largely undisputed, also in today's Kurdish society. At the same time, a scarcely reflected, quasi-nostalgic adherence to the Baath regime model of a welfare state based on oil exploitation hampers the advancement of diverse local economics and social processes.

### **3.2 The Kurds in Iraq<sup>31</sup>**

#### *The Kurds – a nation without a state*

Kurds frequently refer to two record-breaking facts as identity markers. Firstly, they claim to represent the »cradle of civilization« and to constitute one of the oldest cultural nations in the world – an allusion to archaeological findings in the Kurdish region of the oldest human settlements (Bakhewan, 1999).<sup>32</sup> Secondly, they define themselves as the world's largest nation without a state. Every Kurdish child knows that after the First World War and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the Treaty of Sèvres in 1920 granted the Kurds an autonomous state. Three years later, this treaty was overwritten by the Treaty of Lausanne, and thirty million Kurds were scattered – stateless – across five different countries: Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Syria and the former Soviet Union.

Today, the number of Kurds who live in Iraq is estimated to be nearly six million and to make up nearly twenty per

**31** For this chapter I largely refer to Chaliand (1978), Vanly (1986), van Bruinessen (1989) and McDowall (2004).

**32** When they meet Germans, Kurds frequently refer to common Aryan origins. In numerous embarrassing situations, I made efforts to decline their attempt to bond, explaining why our recent history forbids us to refer to our Aryan origins. Indeed after several such discussions with Kurdish people in the first few years, I now deliberately overhear the reference and change the subject.

cent of the Iraqi population.<sup>33</sup> The majority of them are Sunni Muslims, although there are Kurdish Shia communities in the region of Khanaqin, Yezidi communities in the region of Dohuk and Kurds of Assyrian Christian belief in various locations of Iraqi Kurdistan. The Kurds lay claim to a region that includes parts of Mossul (Ninive region), Kirkuk city and governorate and the city of Khanaqin (Dyala governorate). What is currently defined as the Kurdish autonomous region, however, excludes these disputed areas. When talking about Kurdistan-Iraq in the following discussion, I refer to the existing Kurdish autonomous region that encompasses the governorates of Erbil, Dohuk, Sulaimania and the Germyan region.

The Kurdish region in Iraq is a fertile, primarily mountainous region, rich in water resources. Traditionally, people lived on agriculture and animal husbandry and were organized along tribal loyalties, laws and morals. Yet the idyllic pastoral image of Kurdish men and women dressed in colourful traditional costumes in the midst of magnificent, sparsely inhabited alpine worlds has been obsolete for quite some time. The largest Iraqi oil reserves are in the Kurdish-settled areas, where in the late 1920s oil extraction and production triggered a rapid process of industrialization and urbanization and the emergence of an industrial working class. The destruction of the Kurdish rural areas by the Baath regime in the 1970s and 1980s has forced other tens of thousands to flee to the cities. By the 1990s, three and a half million Kurds in Iraq were living in the urban centres.

**33** The last census in Iraq was taken in 1987, shortly before Anfal, when the anti-Kurdish policy of the Baath regime reached its climax. Its results have to be taken with reservations. The new Iraqi constitution foresees a census to be implemented soon, specifically to get clarity on population proportions in the disputed areas. However, considering the sensitivity of ethnic questions, specifically in the disputed areas, the census was postponed several times and has not yet been implemented. Estimates of the size of the Kurdish population in Iraq vary from some five to six million people and between a percentage of seventeen and twenty per cent of the Iraqi population.

### *The Kurdish struggle for autonomy*

Ever since the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923 shattered the Kurdish dream of an autonomous state, Iraqi Kurds have fought for autonomy status within the state of Iraq. In the 1940s, they gathered around the Kurdish leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), Mulla Mustafa Barzani, who led a long-term armed struggle against the central government in Baghdad, based for the most part in the rural tribal structures in the Badinan area and the urban lower- and middle-class intellectuals of Sulaimania, Erbil and Kirkuk. Up until 1975, the KDP remained the leading and unifying force within the Kurdish movement.

Once the Baath Party came to power, the suppression of Kurdish resistance became a priority on its political agenda. The unrest in northern Iraq in the heart of the Iraqi oil reserves and the border regions with Iran, Turkey and Syria constituted a major threat to the nationalization of the oil industry and consequently to the national economy, territorial stability and border security. The Kurds had entered into various alliances with neighbouring states in the past in an effort to gain support for their struggle against the Iraqi central government. Ideological integration of the Kurds into the Pan-Arab nationalism of the Baath regime would have been nigh impossible.

The regime adopted a two-tracked strategy of integration and repression towards the Kurds. During the first short episode of Baath Party government in 1963, the Baathists announced the »cleansing of the Northern region from the shabby remnants of the Barzanists« and had proclaimed »death to the separatist traitors and enemies of the people« (al-Ghamrawi, 1968, quoted by Ofteringer, 1999b, p. 150, the author's translation from the German).

Their policy changed in 1969, when they officially recognized the Kurdish movement and began negotiations with Mulla Mustafa Barzani and his KDP.

*Appeasement: control and integration*

In a memorandum in 1970, the Baath regime granted cultural rights to the Kurds and acknowledged Kurdish as the second official language.<sup>34</sup> A general amnesty for Kurdish political prisoners was issued and preparations undertaken for a census, a precondition for the planned instalment of a Kurdish regional government for the areas settled mostly by Kurds. A constitutional passage defining Iraq as a state containing two nationalities – Kurdish and Arab – with equal rights was announced. While the memorandum initially led to the appeasement of those in the Kurdish armed resistance, it never became a binding agreement, since the Kurds failed to secure one of their key demands, the integration of the oil-rich cities of Kirkuk and Mossul into the autonomous region. (Today, the demand that Kirkuk should be included in the autonomous region is still the chief bone of contention between the current Kurdistan Regional Government and the central Iraqi government in Baghdad). Despite its rejection by the KDP, the Baath regime issued and gradually implemented a unilateral autonomy statute for the Kurdish region (excluding Kirkuk and Mossul). In the years to come, the regime would frequently refer to this unilateral agreement, e.g. to implement the census in 1987, which was later used as a database for repressive measures and the Anfal Campaign of 1988.

On the whole, the Kurdish population benefited economically from Iraq's oil-based welfare services. The inhabitants of Kurdish cities enjoyed a high standard of living, with access to free health, educational and social services. State-sponsored construction projects advanced the infrastructure of the Kurdish region and led to the emergence of a new

**34** Schools in Kurdish areas were given Kurdish names. Newroz, the Kurdish New Year's Day on 21 March, was made a national holiday. Plans were announced for the construction of a Kurdish university in the city of Sulaimania and for a Kurdish Academy of Sciences (Asadi, 2007, p. 282).

social class of private entrepreneurs who were both dependent on and loyal to the regime.

The Baath Party's ramified structures penetrated Kurdish society, while the carrot- and-stick principle ruled public and political life. Political and government positions were filled by both Arabs and Kurds allegiant to the regime; loyalty and membership in mass organizations - rigorously under the surveillance of a ubiquitous control system - were a precondition for public sector posts, university entrance or business ventures. Baathist ideology was echoed via Kurdish television stations, radios and newspapers in the Kurdish language.

Numerous Kurds were directly involved in the regime's repressive organs, the Iraqi army, the secret service and Iraqi police structures. Among the regime's profiteers were quite a number of Kurdish tribal leaders. While Baathist propaganda attacked these leaders as the backward residue of the old feudal system, in reality the Baath regime set up political, economic and military alliances with those tribes that were in conflict with pro-KDP or pro-resistance tribes (Ibrahim, 1983). Kurdish tribal leaders loyal to the Baath-regime were appointed as so-called *mustashars* (advisors) and were responsible for the distribution of subsidized food and security in the countryside (Leezenberg, 1999). Their armed Kurdish militia would later develop into the so-called *National Defence Battalions*, which were deployed against Kurdish resistance fighters in the Iran-Iraq War and played an active and dark role in the Anfal Campaign.

Thus, hundreds of thousands of Kurds participated actively in the Baathist system. Some were forced, others saw no alternative and yet others deliberately participated in order to advance their careers. It is vital to understand this involvement if we are to understand the specific unfolding of the Anfal Campaign and its impact as well as the ambivalences in today's Kurdish government and society's dealing with the former collaborators.

Parallel to its political negotiations with Kurdish parties and its to all appearances integrative approach towards the

Kurds, the Baath regime had prepared other strategies well in advance for a »solution to the Kurdish problem«. Once the Baath Party came to power, a »High Committee for the Issues of the North« was established. Headed by Saddam Hussein, it coordinated secret service activities against the Kurdish movement and drew up repressive measures.

### *Open conflict*

The unilateral 1970 Autonomy Agreement soon began to unravel. Following the attempted assassination of Mulla Mustafa Barzani by the Baath regime in 1974, the Kurds once again took up arms under Barzani's leadership. The appeasement policy turned into open war between the Baath regime and the Kurds (Chaliand, 1978). The 1974-1975 rebellion marked an internationalization of the Iraqi-Kurdish question, with the Iranian Shah regime and the US government supporting the Kurds against a Soviet-backed Baath regime (Morris, 2002). The rebellion came to an abrupt end, however, when the Shah regime ceased all military and financial support following the Algiers Agreement between Iran and Iraq in 1975. At the time, approximately one hundred thousand Kurdish fighters and civilians fled to Iran.

This defeat and related critics against Barzani's allegedly short-sighted alliance policies led to the emergence of new Kurdish political parties, the largest of which was the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) led by Jalal Talabani, a former fellow combatant of Barzani. The PUK spinoff and the subsequent weakening of the hitherto uncontested position of the KDP and Mulla Mustafa Barzani became the cornerstone of an enduring and irreconcilable conflict between the two parties, that lasts to this day. The two parties have shaped the Kurdish political landscape in Iraq ever since and are today the chief pillars of the Kurdistan Regional Government.

Both parties stand for Kurdish nationalism and autonomy status within the Iraqi state. The KDP recruits its followers primarily in the rural Badinan region that borders with Tur-

key and Iran and includes the city of Erbil (Kurdish: Hawler), the capital of the Kurdish region. It also incorporates some of the powerful tribes along the borders. Since the extended Barzani family holds a large portion of the positions of power in the party, the KDP is frequently considered the more conservative or feudal of the two parties. The PUK is more influential in the Soran region, which includes the city of Sulaimania, and in the Germyan and Kirkuk regions. With its Marxist-Leninist wing KOMALA, the PUK was able to recruit followers among industrial workers and urban intellectuals. On the surface, this makes it appear the more »modern« party. Both parties, however, are hierarchically structured around prominent leadership figures: the son of Mulla Mustafa Barzani, Massud Barzani (KDP), and Jalal Talabani (PUK), president of Iraq from 2005 to 2014. After they formed the Kurdistan Regional Government in 1992 and unified in the struggle for Kurdistan as a federal state within Iraq, their programmatic differences became almost imperceptible (Morris, 1999).<sup>35</sup> They base their power on historical and regional loyalties and, particularly after 1991, on extended systems of nepotism and clientelism.

Historically the two parties and their *peshmerga*<sup>36</sup> units became the driving force behind the Kurdish national movement and resistance against the Baath regime in their respective sphere of influence, albeit the Kurdish branch of the Iraqi Communist Party and the Kurdistan Socialist Party likewise played a role in the armed resistance against the Iraqi regime.

**35** KOMALA, the Marxist-Leninist wing of the PUK, was dissolved at the Party congress in 1992, when the party adopted a Kurdish nationalist, social-democratic approach.

**36** *Peshmerga* is the Kurdish denomination of armed fighters in the Kurdish liberation movement. The word literally means »those facing death«.

*Collective punishment and terror in the cities*

Baath regime retaliation measures against Kurdish resistance were ruthless. Apart from pitching the military apparatus against the few *peshmerga* units operating in the rural areas of Iraq, collective punishment and a series of repressive measures were carried out against the families of alleged resistance fighters and their social contexts. Their relatives were removed from government employment, expelled from their homes, excluded from food distribution, often subjected to imprisonment and tortured to extract information. A number of interviewed women Anfal survivors had been imprisoned prior to the Anfal Campaign because their sons or husbands belonged to the Kurdish liberation movement.

Members or supporters of the Kurdish movement captured in the urban centres were publicly executed; Kurdish school pupils and university students were forced to witness the executions. The victims' corpses were sent to their families accompanied by a bill to pay for ammunition used to execute their relatives,<sup>37</sup> one of the many examples of the specific Baathist combination of terror and bureaucracy. These atrocities were documented meticulously: when Kurdish *peshmerga* units captured the Baath security services building in Sulaimania in 1991, they found countless documents, including videos that showed men and women under interrogation in the security prison, medical experiments on prisoners and the raping of women. According to statements by PUK *peshmerga*, much of this material was destroyed immediately, since »it would have been unbearable if anyone had seen it and greatly damaged the honour of the respective prisoners and their families«. <sup>38</sup> More than twenty tons of documentary material was sent to the USA in 1991, where Human Rights Watch made a preliminary assessment (Human Rights Watch, 1993, 1994).

**37** From PUK *peshmerga* accounts in Sulaimania 1993.

**38** Interview (1999) with a PUK *peshmerga* involved in the conquest of the Baath security building in Sulaimania in 1991.

### *The expulsion of the Fayli Kurds*

The so-called Fayli Kurds, a large Shia Kurdish community of between 1.5 and 2 million people whose homeland lies in the border area between Iran and Iraq, were another Baathist target. Fayli Kurds in Iraq lived for the most part in the provinces of Mandali and Dyala (Khanaqin) and in Baghdad. The Baath regime saw them as Iranians and spies and had subjected them to repression, forced disappearance and displacement since 1969.

In one attack in autumn 1971 alone, Iraq expelled around 40,000 Fayli Kurds to Iran, claiming they were Iranian nationals. In the wake of the Iran-Iraq War, Saddam Hussein invited wealthy Baghdad businessmen to a meeting at the Chamber of Commerce. Guests found to be Fayli Kurds were arrested on the spot and expelled to Iran, marking the beginning of another wave of Fayli Kurd expulsions. The total number of expelled Fayli Kurds is between 100,000 and 300,000 (Vanly, 2002; Fawcett & Tanner, 2002; McDowell, 2004).

### *Displacement and ethnic cleansing – the mujamma’at*

Since the early 1970s, the Kurds in Iraq have been subjected to systematic waves of deportation.<sup>39</sup> In 1974, the Baath regime evacuated a thirty-kilometre wide belt along the Iranian-Turkish border in order to establish a security area. For this purpose, 2,000 Kurdish villages were razed to the ground, forests and fields burnt and infrastructure destroyed. The border areas remained »prohibited zones« until 1991. In an effort to undermine Kurdish aspirations to the oil-rich regions of Khanaqin and Kirkuk, thousands of Kurds were expelled from these areas, which were subsequently settled with Arab families. The deportation of the

**39** For an overview of displacements in Iraq before and after 2003, see Fawcett and Tanner (2002).

Kurds continued until 2003, with vast numbers of so-called Kirkuk refugees living in shelters and tents for years.

Displacement and forced resettlement was a common collective punishment for individual villages that had allegedly supported the *peshmerga*. Whereas some families were deported to southern Iraq and obliged to settle in its sandy, marshy regions, others were sent to *mujamma'at* – so-called collective villages or resettlement camps in the Kurdish heartland.<sup>40</sup> These relocation camps were erected for the most part along the main roads of the plains, making them easy to control by the military. They were huge town-like camps with uniform cement houses, roads at right angles, water supplies, sewage systems and health and educational services. Families were allocated housing equivalent to what had previously belonged to them and had been destroyed. This occurred on a loan basis: monthly rent payments enabled families to eventually become homeowners.<sup>41</sup> The inhabitants of the camps had almost no income opportunities, their traditional social and rural structures had disintegrated and the majority now depended on government food and job provision. From oil industry workers and agricultural producers, they had become passive recipients of government handouts and thus easy prey to control measures. Kurdish regime collaborators or *mustashar* and the attendant militia controlled the camp population.

The Baath regime portrayed the resettlement camps as *qura asriya* (modern villages) or *mudun asriya* (modern towns) (Ofteringer, 1999a) and gave them programmatic names like *Khabat* (struggle). The camps erected for Anfal survivors bore names such as *Sumud* (steadfastness) or *Medina Shoresh* (revolutionary town). Forced displacement

**40** The Arabic word *mujamma'a* (pl. *mujamma'at*) literally means group settlement, collective settlement.

**41** From accounts given by families I met during my work in reconstruction projects in the Pishder area. The families originally came from Qala Dizeh and were deported in 1989 to the *Khabat mujamma'a*.

was publicly legitimized as a modernization campaign for backward Kurdish farmers.

Up to 1981 alone, some 700,000 people had been forcibly displaced and relocated within the Kurdish areas (Vanly, 1986). Up to 2001, UN sources arrived at figures between 600,000 and 800,000 displaced people in Kurdistan (Fawcett & Tanner, 2002).

*The abduction, murder and disappearance of 8,000 men from the Barzani tribe*

In 1983, Iraqi security forces abducted 8,000 male members of the Barzani tribe between the ages of seventeen and seventy from four collective towns around the city of Erbil, where they had previously been forcibly resettled after the destruction of their home villages in the Barzan valley in the Badinan region. The Baath regime declared the operation to be retaliation for the participation of a KDP division in an Iranian military offensive. The men were taken by lorry to southern Iraq, while Saddam Hussein announced that the »traitors had been taken to hell« (Offeringer, 1999a, p. 21). Their fate remained unknown until their bodies were discovered in mass graves close to the Kuwait border after the fall of the Baath regime in 2003.<sup>42</sup> The abduction and murder of the Barzani men is today considered a prelude to and part of the Anfal Campaign that should occur five years later.

**42** The wives, mothers and other relatives of these men were forced to live in the *mujamma'a* Koshtepe until 1991, when they returned to their home region, the Barzan valley. These women faced problems similar to those of women Anfal survivors (Karrer, 1998).

### 3.3 The Anfal Campaign<sup>43</sup>

#### *Preparations*

In the course of the Iran-Iraq War, the conflict between Kurds and the Iraqi government escalated. The Kurdish *peshmerga* units exploited the weakening of the regime and intensified their guerrilla attacks. They entered into alliances with Iran to obtain weapons and funds, and they crossed the border to train and retreat. During the 1980s, the *peshmerga* succeeded in controlling large parts of the Kurdish rural areas, for example, the Germyan region. The Iraqi regime perceived cooperation between Iran and the Kurdish resistance as an existential threat. During a renewed attempt at negotiations between the Baath regime and the Kurdish parties in 1983, Vice-President Tariq Aziz warned a PUK delegate:

In the war against Iran the whole world is with us. This war will one day come to an end. If you stand with us now, we will not forget it. But if you contribute to prolonging this war, we will deploy our army against you after the war against Iran. We are ready to sacrifice one year of our time and a hundred thousand of our men (Mustafa, 1999, quoted from Fischer-Tahir, 2003, p. 177, the author's translation from the German).

On 18 March 1987, General Ali Hassan al-Majid, a cousin of Saddam Hussein, was appointed General Secretary of the High Office for Issues of the North. A special decree assigned him full responsibility for all military units, secret services, the Popular Army and the administrative structures in the Kurdish north. The intention was to restore order and stability in the northern territories or, in al-Majid's own words, »to solve the Kurdish problem and slaughter the saboteurs« (Human Rights Watch, 1993, p. 351).

**43** For descriptions of the Anfal process I refer largely to *Genocide in Iraq* by Human Rights Watch (1993).

Under al-Majid's command, the systematic counterinsurgency policy against the Kurds was converted into a bureaucratic and meticulously planned campaign of annihilation. Using poison gas, al-Majid launched one of his first attacks on the villages of Sheikh Wasan and Balisan in the Balisan valley, a PUK stronghold that hosted one of the PUK offices, in April 1987. More than a hundred people in the village of Sheikh Wasan were killed instantly. Four hundred survivors were later captured, deported and never seen again. Al-Majid declared areas with active *peshmerga* units »prohibited zones«. Hence not only active members of Kurdish resistance units and their families were defined as saboteurs; so was the entire population of rural areas with *peshmerga* activities.

The military directive SF/4800 issued by al-Majid personally on 20 June 1987, which specifies how to treat people found in the prohibited zones, is an order for mass killing:

Subject: Procedure to deal with villages prohibited for security reasons

In view of the fact that the officially announced deadline for the amalgamation of these villages expires on June 21, 1987, we have decided that the following action should be taken with effect from June 22, 1987:

1. All the villages in which subversives, agents of Iran and similar traitors to Iraq are still to be found shall be regarded as out of bounds for security reasons;
2. They shall be regarded as operational zones that are strictly out of bounds to all persons and animals and in which the troops can open fire at will, without any restrictions, unless otherwise instructed by our Bureau;
3. Travel to and from these zones, as well as all agricultural, animal husbandry and industrial activities shall be prohibited and carefully monitored by all the competent agencies within their respective fields of jurisdiction;
4. The corps commanders shall carry out random bombardments using artillery, helicopters and aircraft, at all times of the day or night *in order to kill the largest number of persons present*

*in these prohibited zones, keeping us informed of the results;*  
[emphasis added]

5. All persons captured in those villages shall be detained and interrogated by the security services and *those between the ages of 15 and 70 shall be executed after any useful information has been obtained from them*, of which we should be duly notified;  
[emphasis added]

6. Those who surrender to the governmental or Party authorities shall be interrogated by the competent agencies for a maximum period of three days, which may be extended to ten days if necessary, provided that we are notified of such cases. If the interrogation requires a longer period of time, approval must be obtained from us by telephone or telegraph or through comrade Taher [Tawfiq] al-Ani;

7. *Everything seized by the advisers [mustashars] and troops of the National Defense Battalions shall be retained by them, with the exception of heavy, mounted and medium weapons. They can keep the light weapons, notifying us only of the number of these weapons. The Corps commanders shall promptly bring this to the attention of all the advisers, company commanders and platoon leaders and shall provide us with detailed information concerning their activities in the National Defence Battalions.*  
[emphasis added]

For information and action within your respective fields of jurisdiction. Keep us informed. [Signed]

Comrade Ali Hassan al-Majid Member of the Regional Command Secretary General of the Northern Bureau

(Quotation from Human Rights Watch, 1993, pp. 82-83).

This self-explanatory order also outlined the active role envisaged for the National Defence Battalions, the Kurdish militias loyal to the regime, during the Anfal Campaign. During the Iran-Iraq War, vast numbers of Kurds had joined the militia as a means of escaping deployment to the front with Iran. By the end of the war, Kurdish men in the militia numbered approx. 450,000 (Mustafa, 1997). The majority of Kurds considered these militiamen collaborators, referring to them derogatively as *jash*, little donkeys.

A national census announced for October 1987 assumed the character of an ultimatum for the inhabitants of the prohibited zones. They were exhorted to »return to their national roots«, in other words to leave their villages, which were controlled by *peshmerga* units, and move voluntarily to the relocation camps. If not, they would henceforth be regarded as saboteurs and deserters and risk punishment by death. Families known to be supportive of the Kurdish national movement in the urban and rural areas controlled by the regime were forcibly deported to the prohibited zones, where they shared the fate of the so-called saboteurs. Four months later, the Anfal Campaign targeted the prohibited zones one by one.

### *The poison gas attack on the town of Halabja*

Before Anfal unfolded, the Kurds were to suffer yet another catastrophe. On 16 March 1988, the Iraqi regime carried out a poison gas attack on the city of Halabja in the northeast of the Kurdish region in the immediate vicinity of the Iranian border. Five thousand people died instantly. Thousands of others survived but were seriously injured, and many in the region still suffer from severe health impairment as a result. Even in the third generation, the rate of leukaemia and birth defects in newborn children is high (Gosden, Gardener & Amitay, 2001). The soil will remain contaminated for a long time to come (Ala'Aldeen, 2005; Abdullah, 2009).

Iranian journalists who appeared on the scene immediately after the attack photographed its horrific impact. Images of children, women and men, surprised by sudden death in the midst of their daily activities, shocked the world and became a symbol of Saddam Hussein's savage brutality and his readiness to use weapons of mass destruction against his own people.

Ever since, Kurds have referred to General Ali Hassan al-Majid, the commander responsible for the gas attack on Halabja, as »Chemical Ali«. The Baath regime justified the

attack as a response to cooperation between Iranian *pas-daran*<sup>44</sup> and Kurdish *pershmerga* in cross border activities close to Halabja. The attack on Halabja is frequently seen as a component of the Anfal Campaign, but – as the evaluation of the regime’s documents clearly shows – it was not part of the systematic planning for the Anfal annihilation campaign in the prohibited zones (Human Rights Watch, 1993). To this day, however, the attack on Halabja and the Anfal Campaign constitute a Kurdish national trauma.<sup>45</sup>

### *The Anfal stages*

Implementation of the Anfal Campaign began at the end of February 1988 and evolved in eight stages. Anfal, the code word chosen by the Baath regime, is the title of the eighth *sura* in the Qur’an, which addresses the legitimacy of keeping the spoils of war as a reward for fighting the infidels.<sup>46</sup>

The first stage of the Anfal Campaign began with a massive military attack on the PUK headquarters at Sergalou and Bergalou, which lasted from 23 February to 19 March. The second stage targeted the rural area of Qaradagh, close to the city of Sulaimania, and was carried out from 22 March to 1 April 1988.

The third stage of the Anfal Campaign, often described as most ruthless, was directed against the PUK heartland, the southern Germyan region, from 7 April to 20 April. As my research focuses on this region, the 3rd Anfal stage is described in greater detail in Chapter 3.7. The fourth Anfal

**44** *Pasdarans* is the short form for the Iranian Army of the Guardians of the Islamic Revolution (short: Revolutionary Guards) founded in 1979 to protect the Islamic system of Iran.

**45** For a detailed account of the background to and the implementation and implications of the Halabja gas attack, see Joost Hiltermann’s *A Poisonous Affair* (2007).

**46** Ofteringer (1999a) discusses the Baath regime’s reference to the Anfal *sura* in detail.

stage took place in the Lower Zab valley and on the plains of Koysincak from 3 May to 8 May. The fifth, sixth and seventh stages were carried out in the mountainous areas of Rawanduz and Shaqlawa and lasted from 15 May to 26 August. Here, the inhabitants had already fled the region; Iraqi troops encountered strong opposition from the remaining *peshmerga* units. The eighth and final stage of the Anfal Campaign targeted the Badinan region controlled by the Kurdistan Democratic Party and was launched on 25 August 1988.

The pattern followed in each stage was similar. *Peshmerga* posts and villages in the respective areas were first bombed by the air force; poison gas was used in various locations. These blitz attacks were succeeded by the movement of Iraqi ground troops backed by Kurdish militia, the so-called *jash*, who invaded the regions concerned from all sides. Villages were encircled, houses looted and burned along with barns and cattle, and infrastructure and sources of water destroyed. Villagers were rounded up; in some villages, the men were shot on the spot; in others, men and women were transported by lorry to provisional collection points. Fleeing villagers were hounded to these collection points as well. Here men between the ages of fifteen and fifty and numerous younger women were separated from the rest of the inhabitants and never seen again.

In view of the mass gravesites found years later and several witness accounts by men who managed to escape in the course of deportation, it must be assumed that the deported were killed by firing squad in mass executions. Since the opening of the graves has only recently begun and most of the dead have not yet been identified, the individual fate of countless Anfal victims remains unclear to this day. According to Kurdish sources, the number of Anfal victims amounted to 182,000 (see for example Abdullah, 2008);<sup>47</sup> the Baathist

**47** Kurdish parties made this rough estimate in the aftermath of Anfal. Based on the number of villages destroyed and the average village population, it is still used by Kurdish politicians, academics and victims groups.

military commander responsible, Ali Hassan al-Majid, is reported to have confirmed »no more than 100,000 victims«. <sup>48</sup> Human Rights Watch identified a total of 50,000 victims after evaluating Baath regime documents, but estimate the number as around one hundred thousand (see Human Rights Watch, 1993, 1994; Human Rights Watch & Physicians for Human Rights, 1993; Abd ar-Rahman, 1995; Hiltermann, 2008).

After separation from the men and younger women, the elderly and women with children were subjected to odysseys through several transition camps. Many of them ended up in the notorious prisons in Dibs or Nugra Salman in southern Iraq. Here alone, between six and eight thousand men and women were held prisoner for months in humiliating conditions; dozens of them died every day of starvation, exhaustion or illness, particularly children and the elderly.

### *The end of Anfal*

On 6 September 1988, the Baath regime announced an »amnesty« for those who had survived the Anfal Campaign in camps and prisons. They were then transported to the Kurdish settled regions. Some could escape and hide with relatives in towns and cities; most of them, however, were forced into *mujamma'at*. Here, families who had surrendered and gone to the camps prior to the Anfal Campaign, had received houses and land; prison returnees were instead allocated no or provisional housing and were left largely without assistance. Numerous Anfal survivors died soon after of exhaustion, hunger and despair.

The use and importance of the figure in today's Anfal discourse in Kurdistan will be discussed later in this thesis.

**48** Reports claim that, during negotiations between the Kurdistan Front and Iraqi regime delegates in 1991, the Kurds raised the issue of the whereabouts of 182,000 disappeared during Anfal. Ali Hassan al-Majid is said to have replied angrily: »What is this exaggerated figure of 182,000? (...) It couldn't have been more than 100,000« (Human Rights Watch, 1993, p. 345).

Although the destruction of villages and the arrest, torture and killing of opponents was to continue after 1988,<sup>49</sup> in the logic of the Baath-regime Anfal ended with success in September 1988. The issue of Kurdish *peshmerga* resistance was now »solved«. The few *peshmerga* groups that had managed to survive withdrew to Iran. The previously rebellious rural population was under control of the Iraqi military in the resettlement camps. The Baath regime had taken its revenge on the Kurds.

General Ali Hassan al-Majid's two-year period of absolute power drew to a close on 23 April 1989. At the corresponding ceremony, he personally declared an end to the state of emergency. When Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990, al-Majid became governor of Kuwait; in 1993 he was appointed Minister of Defence in Iraq. After 2003, the Iraqi High Tribunal sentenced him to death and he was executed on 25 January 2010 (see Chapter 12).

### *Reactions and interpretations*

As outlined above, the Baath regime openly used extreme violence as a political instrument; no attempt was made to conceal the Anfal Campaign from the public eye. During the course of the Anfal Campaign, Iraqi media reported daily on the events referred to as »the returning of the saboteurs to their national roots«, »collective measures against the saboteurs« or »resettlement of the saboteurs to the south«, though no reference was made to deportation or the murder of tens of thousands of civilians (Human Rights Watch, 1993). Human Rights Watch (1993) has published documents and audiotape transcripts documenting Baath officials congratulating each other and President Saddam Hussein on the suc-

**49** The 20,000 inhabitants of the town of Qaladize and surrounding villages situated near the Iranian borders were evacuated and the settlements destroyed in 1989. The entire population was relocated to *mujamma'at*.

successful implementation of Anfal. On one audiotape, Ali Hassan al-Majid can be heard speaking at a Baath Party meeting about members of the Iraqi army who had hesitated to carry out Anfal orders:

How were we to convince them to solve the Kurdish problem and slaughter the saboteurs? So we started to show these senior commanders on TV that [the saboteurs] had surrendered. Am I supposed to keep them in good shape? What am I supposed to do with them, these goats? Then a message reaches me from that great man, the father [i.e. Saddam Hussein], saying take good care of the families of the saboteurs and this and that. The general command brings it to me. I put his message to my head. But take good care of them? No, I will bury them with bulldozers (audiotape transcript, Human Rights Watch, 1993, pp. 351-352).

The Anfal Campaign became a permanent fixture in the Baath regime's propaganda. In 1993, five years after Anfal and Halabja, the Iraqi newspaper al-Iraq wrote:

The sons of our proud nation, Arabs and Kurds, will commemorate the heroic Anfal operations tomorrow. Anfal put an end to the collaboration of those who separated from the virtuous sons of our Kurdish people and who went as far as to serve the stranger. The implementation and success of the operation gives it a place in our history and military academia as an example of the achievements of the courageous Iraqi army and the Iraqi people in defending the fatherland under the historical leadership of our President and Leader Saddam Hussein. May God protect and support him (quoted from Ofteringer 1999b, p. 153, the author's translation from the German).

Other than the poison gas attack on Halabja, the Anfal Campaign did not make international headlines and to this day is still largely unknown to the international public (see Winter, 2008). Kanan Makiya (1992) was the first to speak out about Anfal to an international audience. In 1993, Human Rights Watch published their study on Anfal, *Genocide in Iraq*, the most comprehensive and reliable source on the events that took place. The study is partly based on the eval-

uation of Iraqi regime documents found in police stations and administrative offices in the Kurdish region after the government's withdrawal from this area in 1991 and partly on interviews conducted by Human Rights Watch representatives in the early 1990s. Later, Kurdish and international publications on Anfal refer almost exclusively to the facts documented in *Genocide in Iraq*. The book has been translated into Kurdish several times,<sup>50</sup> and excerpts are used to portray the historical background in almost every Kurdish publication on Anfal, on government websites and in introductions by Kurdish civil society organizations dealing with Anfal. In *Genocide in Iraq*, Human Rights Watch explicitly refers to Raul Hilberg's *The Destruction of the European Jews* (1985 [1961]), locating Anfal in Hilberg's paradigm of »definition, concentration, annihilation« to describe the stages of the Holocaust. Based on this reference, Human Rights Watch defines Anfal as a genocidal operation. The term genocide has since entered Iraqi Kurdish political and academic discourses on Anfal (Fischer-Tahir, 2012), and international recognition of Anfal as genocide remains a political priority for the Kurdistan Regional Government. Yet the definition of Anfal as genocide, and specifically its comparison with the Holocaust, is disputed both internationally and in Iraq itself. Leezenberg (1999) argues that Anfal did not build on a long-standing tradition of resentment against the Kurdish population. Although Baath documents prove the systematic characterization of the Kurdish population as »saboteurs« and »collaborators« and the use of dehumanizing terms such as »goats« and »human scum« to refer to them, the regime tended to allude to notions of »fatherland«, »nation« and be-

**50** Middle East Watch/Human Rights Watch (1999): *Cînosayd le 'Iraq-da-u pelamar-î Enfal boşer kurd* (Genocide in Iraq and the Anfal attacks on the Kurds). Translated by Siyamend Muftîzade. Sulaimaniya: Khak. Middle East Watch/Human Rights Watch (2000): *'Iraq-u tawan-î cînosayd. Şalaw-î Enfal dijî kurd* (Iraq and the Anfal Campaigns against the Kurds). Translated by Jemal Mirza 'Ezîz. Berlin: Havîbun.

trayal, rather than to racial and ethnic categories (Leezenberg, 1999), while at the same time praising the sons of the Kurdish people loyal to the regime.

Apart from this somewhat academic debate, however, it is beyond doubt that the Baath regime conceived the Anfal Campaign as a strategy for the systematic annihilation of the rural population in major areas of the Kurdish region, targeting combatants and civilians indiscriminately with the utmost brutality and cynicism. The most frightening aspect of the Anfal Campaign is the bureaucratic rationality with which the mass murder of thousands of Kurds was organized and implemented (Oftringer, 1999b).

### 3.4 Kurdistan-Iraq 1991-2003 - a makeshift life

#### *The US-led invasion of Iraq in 1991*

On 2 August 1990, an economically weakened Iraq pitched the full weight of its inflated military apparatus into the military invasion of Kuwait. After immediate condemnation by the UN Security Council Resolution No. 661 (1990)<sup>51</sup> and the imposition of economic sanctions against Iraq, the US government prepared for military attacks on Iraq under the code word *Desert Shield* later *Desert Storm*. On 15 January 1991, Iraq was invaded by a coalition of thirty-four countries headed by the USA. In many ways, this Second Gulf War or First Iraq War marked a historical caesura. It was the first military intervention against an independent state after the collapse of the Soviet socialist block; it was likewise the first of what could be termed »high-tech media wars«, in which millions of people around the world watched the success or failure of individual »surgical bomb attacks« on their televi-

**51** United Nations Security Council Resolution No. 661 (Iraq-Kuwait), 6 August 1990. Available at: <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/575/11/IMG/NR057511.pdf?OpenElement>, p.19 (last accessed 1 April 2013).

sion screens. Furthermore, it was the first time an alliance of pro-intervention states, the so-called military »coalition of the willing«, was to appoint itself the legitimate executor of »the will of the UN« where UN peacekeeping or peace-making troops could not or would not intervene.

### *Betrayed hopes: Kurdish and Shia insurrections*

While the US-led invasion of Iraq caused worldwide protest, provoking both, anti-war and anti-US demonstrations, large segments of the Kurdish and Shiite populations in Iraq welcomed the invasion as an opportunity to purge the country of the remorseless Baath regime. When the US government openly called on Kurds and Shiites in Iraq to insurrect, they seized the occasion. In April 1991, vast numbers of Kurdish inhabitants in the north joined the *peshmerga* in what later became known as the Kurdish insurrection (Kurdish: *ra-parîn*), forcing Iraqi troops to withdraw from major areas of the Kurdish settled regions.

Revolts broke out simultaneously in the Shia-dominated south, i.e. in Basra, Najaf, Karbala, Nasariya, Kufa and several other cities. The *Sha'aban Intifatha*- the people's uprising, was carried out by demoralized Iraqi army soldiers and Shiite opposition parties such as the Islamic Dawa Party and the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution.

Kurdish and Shia hopes for US and other international support, however, were betrayed. The international coalition had already achieved its war goal: a weakened Saddam Hussein in a territorially united Iraq. Having no interest in a possible division of Iraq, Kurdish control of the oilfields or an alliance of a strong Shiite south with Iran, they simply abandoned the rebellions.

The response of Saddam Hussein's regime to the uprisings was cruel: Iraqi troops - led by the notorious Republican Guards and commanded by the equally notorious Ali Hassan al-Majid - invaded southern Iraqi cities. Within a few weeks they had crushed the rebellion and left tens of thou-

sands dead. In the Kurdish north, Iraqi troops re-conquered the city of Kirkuk from *peshmerga* forces. Little else was needed. Realizing the absence of international protection and mindful of the poison gas attack on Halabja and the Anfal Campaign, two million Kurds fled to Turkey and Iran at the end of March 1991.

»Humanitarian intervention« - *safe havens*?<sup>52</sup>

Images of the mass exodus were transmitted around the world, finally bringing the fate of the Kurds to international attention. Turkey's fear of destabilization at its borders was the driving force behind the first military intervention carried out by an international alliance for humanitarian purposes. The Iraq War coalition forces (namely USA and Great Britain) imposed no-fly zones on Iraq above the 36th parallel (covering only part of the Kurdish settled regions, i.e. excluding Sulaimania, the second-largest Kurdish city) and below the 32nd parallel (protecting certain areas in the Shia-dominated south of Iraq, including Basra). Under the military protection of primarily British and Dutch troops, Kurdish refugees were accompanied back to Iraq in operation Safe Haven. While these »safe havens« are often mistakenly described as UN protection zones, in reality they were not sanctioned by a UN mandate. Created for the sole purpose of repatriating refugees, they were dissolved shortly after. UN Security Council Resolution 688 from 5 April

**52** An overview of the international legal aspects of the humanitarian intervention in northern Iraq is given in Helena Cook's *The Safe Haven in Northern Iraq* (1995). Bernhard Winter's *Untergehen im Sicheren Hafen* (Drowning in the Safe Haven) (2002) gives a detailed analysis of the international community's half-hearted intervention and its implications for Iraqi Kurdish politics and society. David Keen's *The Kurds in Iraq: How safe is their haven now?* (1993) highlights international aid policies and the precarious situation of the Kurds in Iraq following the intervention. See also Stichting Nederlands-Koerdistan (1996).

1991<sup>53</sup> merely urged the Iraqi regime to respect human rights and give access to international humanitarian organizations with relief programmes for the Kurdish population. The integrity of Iraqi territory remained untouched by the UN, and the Baath regime its sole counterpart in Iraq.

At the same time, economic sanctions imposed on the whole of Iraq, including the Kurdish region, led to a complete breakdown of the Iraqi economy and the impoverishment of the Iraqi people in subsequent years. This was intensified by Saddam Hussein's policy of exploiting the embargo. Indeed, the somewhat half-hearted international intervention created a set of pseudo-protected circumstances that enabled the people of Iraq to live lives that can only be described as makeshift. Between 1991 and 2003, the engagement of the international community in both Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan was confined to humanitarian programmes that would cushion the impact of economic sanctions on the population. The international community undertook no steps towards a long-term political solution for the region.

### *The Kurdistan Regional Government*

Some months later the two major Kurdish parties, then united under the title of the Kurdistan Front, negotiated with the Baath regime on the future status of the Kurdish-controlled areas. Negotiations failed when the Baath regime rejected Kurdish claims to the oil-rich regions of Kirkuk, Khanaqin and to some extent Mossul. In October 1991, however, the regime withdrew its troops and administrative bodies from an area that extended beyond the boundary of the no-fly zones, but excluded the disputed terrains. A provisional frontline between Iraqi troops and *peshmerga*

**53** United Nations Security Council Resolution No. 688 (Iraq), 5 April 1991. Available at: <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/596/24/IMG/NR059624.pdf?OpenElement>, p.31 (last accessed 1 April 2011).

forces henceforth marked the borders of this provisional de facto autonomous region to be administrated by the Kurds.

Despite the provisional framework, the Kurdistan Front prepared the first democratic elections to the Kurdistan Regional Parliament. The overwhelming majority of the population enthusiastically participated in the elections. However, the reelection results were never published. Instead, Barzani and Talabani announced their agreement to share power in Kurdistan, the so-called fifty-fifty split. Henceforth and to this day, the fifty-fifty power-sharing principle between KDP and PUK has been adopted in all political, administrative and public institutions and has hampered their functioning and professionalization (Winter, 2002; Natali, 2010).

Assyrian Christians, Turkmen and Yezidi parties were granted minority seats in parliament. The Communist Party of Kurdistan and the Kurdistan Islamic Union were assigned parliamentary seats and government posts. The first session of the Iraqi Kurdistan National Assembly marked a shift in Iraqi Kurdish policy: abandoning previous claims to autonomy, the parliamentarians voted unanimously for a future constitutional relationship with the Iraqi government and opted for federalism as the constitutional basis and for the Kurdish region to be one of the future regions of the Federal Republic of Iraq.<sup>54</sup>

### *International aid policy and shadow diplomacy*

The Kurdistan Regional Government faced the challenge of governing a region devastated by war and terror. The agriculture and productive sectors were largely destroyed, the population shattered by war and violence and hundreds of thousands of displaced persons scattered in camps and

**54** See Kurdistan Regional Government (1992) Constitution of the Iraqi Kurdistan Region. Preamble. Available at: [http://old.krg.org/docs/K\\_Const.asp](http://old.krg.org/docs/K_Const.asp) (last accessed 1 April 2013).

temporary dwellings. The UN embargo against Iraq and the Baath regime's own embargo against the Kurdish region hampered the reconstruction of houses and infrastructure, agricultural and industrial production and public services. The region's status was provisional and under constant threat by the Baath regime, on the one hand, and by the neighbouring countries of Iran, Turkey and Syria, on the other. The latter - unsettled by the possible uprising of their own Kurdish population following the de facto autonomy of Iraqi Kurdistan - further destabilized the region with political, military and secret service interventions.

The Kurdish government had hoped for international recognition. The territorial integrity of Iraq however, was a high priority on the agenda of the United Nations and the international community; and with reference to international law, the Kurdistan Regional Government was not recognized in terms of political or diplomatic relations. Instead, millions of dollars were channelled annually into the region via short-term humanitarian and emergency aid programmes implemented by international aid organizations. International sanctions against Iraq and the lack of recognition of the Kurdistan Regional Government as implementing partner prevented international organizations from investing in sustainable development and infrastructural projects or strengthening social and administrative services. Instead, they were obliged to concentrate on, for example, the distribution of goods, provisional housing and water supplies. The sole exception was the UN-coordinated reconstruction programme for devastated villages. Here a number of infrastructural measures were implemented under the overall title »shelter for displaced persons«.

The Kurdistan Regional Government, for its part, also refrained from implementing fundamental social and legal reforms or taking economic initiatives. Striving for the status of a federal region within the state of Iraq, it kept Iraqi law and Iraqi administrative structures and procedures in place.

International aid policies further weakened local administrative and political structures and the public sector, leaving the population dependent on international aid programmes.

International humanitarian organizations became powerful agents and dominated the local political agenda. Kurdish parties in their turn huddled around the »honeypots« of the international aid organizations to consolidate their party apparatuses, militias and clientele. Bernhard Winter (2002) gives a detailed analysis of the impact of international aid policy under the telling title *Drowning in the Safe Haven* - a metaphor for the agonizing social realities in Iraqi Kurdistan in the 1990s and the resultant despair of its people.

### *Internal war between the Kurdish parties*

Against this background, tension between the two dominant Kurdish parties that formed the Kurdistan Regional Government (i.e. PUK and KDP) escalated in 1994 to open conflict. The two parties, linked to each other by longstanding political rivalry, hesitated to delegate power to regional government structures and the parliament; instead, they focused on strengthening their individual party apparatus and militia and gave priority to their respective clientele. An armed clash between a KDP-affiliated landowner in the Pishder region and several farmers affiliated with the PUK triggered an internal war between the two parties on the issue of regional power and resources; it would last for years, claim the lives of numerous young Kurdish men on both sides and lead to the division of the Kurdish region into two separate administrative areas, controlled by the respective parties.

The neighbouring countries of Turkey and Iran did much to fuel the internal war in the hope of expanding their own influence in the region. Internationally the Kurdish fratricidal war was severely criticized and resulted in a significant reduction of international assistance to the region.

After decades of Baath terror, this fratricidal war shocked the population. As a result of deep-rooted regional party af-

filiations and the associated dependence on party protection and provision, however, it elicited no more than a weak protest. On the contrary, friction within the Kurdish population along party lines deepened and was further cemented. The war aggravated poverty and the humanitarian crisis in the Kurdish region, adding to the general sense of hopelessness among Iraqi Kurds.

The fighting escalated in August 1996, when the PUK took control of the Kurdish capital, Erbil, hitherto shared by both parties. The KDP asked Saddam Hussein's government for help. Iraqi troops invaded Erbil, while KDP troops headed for the PUK stronghold of Sulaimania. Thousands of people affiliated with the PUK fled once again to Iran, this time from persecution by both the Baath regime and the KDP troops. With Iran backing the PUK troops, the situation soon returned to »normal«. The two areas of control were re-established, whereby Erbil became the capital of the KDP region and Sulaimania that of the PUK region. Refugees were permitted to return from Iran. Again, there was little or no international reaction to the Baath regime's attempt to invade the Kurdish region. The sole exception was the US government evacuation of US personnel and 8,000 Kurds involved in US-funded aid programmes. However, the rude awakening of seeing a Kurdish party appealing to Saddam Hussein for help has left its imprint on Kurdish society, reinforcing scepticism and divisions along party lines.

### *UN-Resolution 986 - »Oil-for-Food«*

To address the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Iraq in April 1995, the United Nations Security Council issued Resolution No. 986, the so-called Oil-for-Food Agreement.<sup>55</sup> This allowed the Iraqi regime to sell the equivalent of

**55** United Nations Security Council Resolution No. 986 (Iraq), 14 April 1995. Available at: <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N95/109/88/PDF/N9510988.pdf?OpenElement> (last accessed 1 April 2013).

US\$ 2 bn. worth of oil every six months and to use the revenue to import food, medicine and humanitarian goods under United Nations control. After only one year, Resolution No. 1153 (1998)<sup>56</sup> raised the oil export ceiling to \$US 5,256 bn. per six months (Katzman & Blanchard, 2005). Twenty-five per cent of the revenue was allocated to infrastructure and public service maintenance programmes implemented by UN organizations. Thirteen per cent was channelled to the Kurdish region to implement infrastructural projects and educational and health programmes. Under the system of Resolution 986, the distribution of food to each Iraqi citizen was re-installed (Pire, 1999). The Oil-for-Food Programme contributed significantly to the improvement of the humanitarian situation in Kurdistan, as well as in central and southern Iraq, and finally allowed for rehabilitation programmes that went beyond short-term relief measures (Natali, 2010). The Oil-for-Food Programme was, however, highly disputed. The implementing UN agencies were accused of large-scale mismanagement and corruption. The programme was further criticized for increasing the dependence of the population on short-term international aid while failing to address vital political issues, thus prolonging the agony of the Kurdish and Iraqi peoples (Winter, 2002). Against all critical analysis of international aid policy, Denise Natali (2010) argues, the continuity of international aid policy since 1991 has supported the transition of the Kurdish region into a quasi-state and laid the ground for a quick recovery and economic growth of the region after 2003.

**56** United Nations Security Council Resolution No. 1153, 20 February 1998. Available at: <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N98/039/34/PDF/N9803934.pdf?OpenElement> (last accessed 1 April 2013).

### **3.5 The fall of the Baath regime in 2003 - political transition**

#### *The decline of the Baath regime*

Parallel to the developments in the Iraqi Kurdish region described above, the economic and humanitarian crisis in central and southern Iraq deteriorated under the on-going sanctions. By 1999, the childhood mortality rate had risen from 47/1000 in the 1980s to 108/1000 (United Nations Children's Fund & Ministry of Health, Iraq, 1999). While the Baath regime used the available scant resources to consolidate its power base in the Sunni Arab heartland, Iraqi television continuously broadcast images of malnourished children and desperate mothers begging »America« for medicine and food, thereby underpinning the regime's international conspiracy theories and its demand for an end to economic sanctions. Pressure on the United Nations to lift the sanctions increased. In February 2000, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Hans Graf von Sponeck, and other UN officials resigned from their posts in protest against the UN sanctions policy (Sponeck, 2005).

Saddam Hussein responded to sanctions and international isolation with a quasi-paranoid policy of violence to maintain power, which was based on a narrow circle of intimate followers, many of whom were members of his extended family. His sons Qusay and Uday, both renowned for their hedonistic lifestyle as much as for their ruthlessness, were assigned key positions in the military and security apparatus. Those who voiced criticism of the regime were subjected to excessive violence. In this climate of extreme economic hardship and fear, women came under particular strain. The General Women's Union issued rallying calls; the distraught but courageous mother loyal to Saddam Hussein became the national emblem for the suffering of Iraq. Women, forced by impoverished circumstances into begging or prostitution, were accused of undermining Iraqi morale. From June 2000 to May 2001, at least 130 women throughout Iraq were ac-

cused of prostitution and publicly beheaded (International Federation for Human Rights & Human Rights Alliance France, 2001).<sup>57</sup> The final years of Saddam Hussein's reign over Iraq were marked by the acute poverty of the Iraqi people and the unleashing of terror and violence beyond international control or attention.

### *The US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003*

It was not until the aftermath of 9/11 that Iraq recaptured international attention: in the struggle against international terrorism, President George Bush Jr. regarded the overthrow of the Baath regime as the second-highest priority after the invasion of Afghanistan. On 2 November 2002, he declared that the USA would invade Iraq without a UN mandate should non-compliance with UN resolutions continue. On 8 November 2002, the UN Security Council issued Resolution No. 1441,<sup>58</sup> which gave Saddam Hussein a final opportunity to disarm and cooperate with UN inspections on weapons of mass destruction. On 6 February 2003, US foreign minister Colin Powell presented – as we now know – largely constructed proof of the existence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and the regime's association with the al-Qaeda network. The UN Security Council refused to mandate a military operation against Iraq. On 20 March, the US-led »coalition of the willing«, which included Great Brit-

**57** Violence and revenge also hit the inner power circle. In 1995, Saddam Hussein's son-in-law, Hussein Kamel, Minister for Military Industries, and his brother, who was married to one of Saddam Hussein's daughters, defected to Jordan with their wives. They returned to Iraq in 1996 after Saddam Hussein had assured them of impunity and reintegration. On their return, however, both brothers were forced to divorce their wives and killed by Ali Hassan al-Majid.

**58** United Nations Security Council Resolution No. 1441, 8 November 2002. Available at: <http://www.un.org/depts/unmovic/new/documents/resolutions/s-res-1441.pdf> (last accessed 1 April 2013).

ain, Spain, Italy, Japan, South Korea and some thirty smaller countries, launched »Operation Iraqi Freedom«. Strategic targets in Baghdad were bombed parallel to invasion by ground troops from Kuwait. Germany and France strongly objected to the invasion of Iraq. The war triggered a wave of protest throughout the world. Bearing the slogan »No blood for oil«, demonstrators expressed their indignation at the bypassing of UN decisions by the US government and its allies. At the same time, a large segment of the Iraqi people welcomed the US-led invasion as the ultimate opportunity to overthrow the hated regime. Several months prior to the invasion, mainly Kurdish and Shiite opposition groups merged to form the Conference of the Iraqi Opposition (2002), and in a paper titled »Transition to Democracy in Iraq« outlined their expectations for the process of political transition following the overthrow of the Baath regime.<sup>59</sup> Opting for a federal Iraq with Kurdistan as a federal state, they envisaged a process of transitional justice and offered structural assistance to carry forward the transitional process. This was to include a tribunal against the chief perpetrators and a truth and reconciliation commission for those seen as guilty of less severe offences.

Other opposition forces, such as the Iraqi Communist Party and the Shia Islamic Dawa Party of the later Prime Minister, Ibrahim al-Jafari, took a more cautious position towards the invasion: they criticized the US-led war, but would ultimately support the transitional political process after the fall of the regime.

All predictions of a long and bloody war were proven wrong. Within three weeks of the first attacks on Baghdad, the Iraqi government and its military collapsed. On 9 April 2003, the coalition forces took control of Baghdad. The toppling of the Saddam Hussein statue in Baghdad's Firdos Square symbolically marked the demise of the Baath regime.

**59** <http://www.iraqfoundation.org/studies/2002/dec/study.pdf> (last accessed 9 Oct. 2011).

*First steps towards political transition*

Executive, legislative and judiciary control of Iraq was assumed by the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), ostensibly the institutional representation of the occupying allied forces, but de facto a branch of the US State Department of Defence, directly accountable to the US State Secretary of Defence, Donald Rumsfeld (Yaphe, 2004). Combat support for the CPA was provided exclusively by US forces. Paul Bremer, who had been appointed head of the transitional authority in early May 2003, assumed the title of US Presidential Envoy and Administrator in Iraq. With Resolution No. 1483 of 22 May 2003,<sup>60</sup> the United Nations Security Council fully recognized the transitional authority of the occupying forces, terminated sanctions against Iraq and the Oil-for-Food Programme, and authorized the CPA to control Iraqi oil exports and revenues. The Security Council recommended a rapid conclusion to occupation, extension of the transition process to Iraqi ownership, and steps towards accountability for crimes committed under the Baath regime. The United Nations, however, were to assume merely an advisory role in the transition process.

As for transitional justice, the US authorities drew on a somewhat simplistic comparison between the Baath regime and the German Nazi regime and opted for the model adopted in Germany after 1945, when the Nuremberg Trials, a series of military tribunals in which prominent leaders of defeated Nazi Germany were prosecuted, went hand in hand with a de-Nazification programme involving all of German society. The focus in Iraq was therefore on hunting down, arresting and bringing to court the fifty most wanted Baath Party officials, with a fugitive Saddam Hussein as the leading target. The CPA began preparations for an Iraqi Special Tribunal. Saddam Hussein was captured by US forces in De-

**60** United Nations Security Council Resolution No. 1483, 22 May 2003. Available at: <http://www.uncc.ch/resolution/res1483.pdf> (last accessed 1 April 2013).

ember 2003 and, along with his close followers, was tried for crimes against humanity and convicted in October 2005 (see Chapter 12).

At the outset, the CPA introduced de-Baathification laws No. 1<sup>61</sup> and No. 2,<sup>62</sup> disbanding the entire Iraqi army overnight and dismissing thousands of Baath Party members from the public and administrative sectors, regardless of their rank or personal involvement in human rights violations (Bajalan, 2008). This poorly considered and precipitous de-Baathification process ordained by the occupying forces was highly contested and later revised and has certainly fuelled the conflict and violence of the years to come (Eisenstadt, 2010).

In economic terms, the CPA hastened to create conditions for the privatization of the Iraqi economy and the oil industry. Apart from other measures, it assured international companies previously involved with the Baath regime of impunity for past crimes in their dealings with Iraq.

In an effort to gain legitimacy among the Iraqi people, the CPA set up an Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) with twenty-five members. The Council drafted and signed the Transitional Administrative Law (TAL) in March 2004, bridging the legal vacuum until such time as a constitution could be drawn up and approved. The political road map foresaw handing power over to an Iraqi Transitional Government in June 2004, elections to the Transitional National Assembly in December 2004, the approval of the constitution in summer 2005 and, finally, elections to instate a fully-fledged Iraqi government in December 2005.

**61** Coalition Provisional Authority Order No.1 De-Baathification of Iraqi Society. CPA/ORD/16 May 2003/01: [http://www.iraqcoalition.org/regulations/20030516\\_CPAORD\\_1\\_DeBa\\_athification\\_of\\_Iraqi\\_Society\\_.pdf](http://www.iraqcoalition.org/regulations/20030516_CPAORD_1_DeBa_athification_of_Iraqi_Society_.pdf) (last accessed 21 Jan. 2012).

**62** Coalition Provisional Authority Order No. 2 Dissolution of Entities.(CPA/ORD/23 May 2003/02):[http://www.iraqcoalition.org/regulations/20030823\\_CPAORD\\_2\\_Dissolution\\_of\\_Entities\\_with\\_Annex\\_A.pdf](http://www.iraqcoalition.org/regulations/20030823_CPAORD_2_Dissolution_of_Entities_with_Annex_A.pdf) (last accessed 21 Jan. 2012).

The members of the IGC were selected primarily from the ranks of former opposition and exile groups. The number of Sunnis, Shiites, Kurds and Arabs in the IGC reflected the corresponding percentage of these groups in the Iraqi population. 60 per cent of IGC members were Shiite and 40 per cent Sunnis; 75 per cent were Arabs and 25 per cent Kurds (International Crisis Group, 2003). The CPA's ethnic-religious approach to the interim governing structure was severely criticized as aggravating the conflicts in Iraqi society. The International Crisis Group (2003, pp. 15-16) criticized the CPA for making »explicit societal divisions which for the most part had been implicit, turning them into organizing principles of government and, in the process, taking the risk of solidifying and exacerbating them« and warned of the resulting marginalization of Sunni Arabs, who were generally made to feel equated with the Baath regime.

Yet despite the obvious missteps in the initial phase of the transitional process, Iraq experienced several months of relative security and optimism following the collapse of the Baath regime. The end to dictatorship was enthusiastically celebrated, particularly by the people in the Kurdish north and the Shiite south. After twelve years of sanctions, of political and cultural isolation, they could finally interact with the outside world again. They travelled extensively throughout the country, visiting places and people they had been unable to see for years. Civil society organizations from different parts of Iraq visited each other, met for national platforms and prepared to engage in the political process and the drafting of the new constitution. The debate about Iraq's future was richer and more diverse, and the CPA's role was contested to a greater extent than would appear in hindsight. The presentation of the various models of transition and dealing with the past was accompanied by heated debate, which was in turn fostered by the presence and involvement of the United Nations with alternative concepts. (Chapter 12 outlines the debate in more detail.)

### *Escalation of violence*

The situation changed abruptly with the bomb attack on the UN headquarters in Baghdad in August 2003 that killed the head of the UN mission in Iraq, Sergio Vieira de Mello, and twenty-one of his colleagues. The UN withdrew to Jordan; security in central and southern Iraq deteriorated in late 2003; Iraq suffered multiple waves of violence. Removed from their posts, frustrated members of the old regime, many with expertise in security and military services, joined local Sunni Islamist groups such as the Kurdish Ansar al-Islam and militant Islamists and jihadists from neighbouring Arab countries. They carried out indiscriminate attacks on the occupation forces, institutions of the new governing structures, foreign nationals working in Iraq, international and local NGOs, and intellectuals, journalists and women activists engaged in the political process. They staged the live decapitation of hostages for television, producing media spectacles of the utmost brutality. They targeted Shia religious ceremonies, as in Karbala and Baghdad in March 2004, when a series of blasts killed two hundred Shia believers in the course of one day.

While Grand Ayatollah al-Sistani, the highest religious authority of the Shia in Iraq and declaredly not involved in politics, supported the transitional Iraqi Government, another Shia leader - Muqtada as-Sadr - refused to cooperate with the occupation forces. Enjoying large support in the poor Shiite urban areas of Baghdad, as-Sadr goaded thousands of his followers into a struggle against the occupation forces, including armed attacks by his Mahdi militia.

The occupation forces responded with massive military attacks and raids, once more claiming the lives of numerous civilians. They frequently behaved insensitively towards local cultural, and moral and religious codes, violating local honour concepts by body-checking and arresting women, marching them in their nightwear or packing them on trucks along with men. In April 2004, evidence of the unbridled torture, abuse and humiliation of Iraqi prisoners by US soldiers

in Abu Ghraib prison was disclosed. This gave many Iraqis additional reason to interpret the US-led invasion and subsequent political process as an aggressive act of subjugation and drove numerous Sunni Arab tribes to insurrection. Entire provinces, such as Anbar and Tikrit in the Sunni Arab heartland, became permanent war zones, and the city of Falluja a symbol of armed resistance against occupation. Mercenaries and criminal gangs exploited the political vacuum for all manner of crimes, including the abduction of women and children.

The overall climate of fear and violence prevented the Iraqi people from engaging in the political process. It hampered the implementation of humanitarian and reconstruction programmes and, after years of sanctions and war, prolonged the precarious economic situation of large segments of the Iraqi population. In 2009, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees estimated that two million Iraqis had fled the country to Syria and Jordan and another 2.4 million had become internally displaced, thousands of whom sought shelter in the safer Kurdish north of Iraq (UNHCR, 2009).

Violence impacted specifically on women's lives. Armed groups threatened women activists in the political process, in civil society and in humanitarian contexts. Women were victims of abduction and rape by criminal gangs. Women were subjected to detention, sexual violence and harassment by US occupation forces, and frequently treated in a manner that violated their sense of honour and shame, and that of their families. Women were ousted from the public sphere and withdrew from workplaces, universities and schools (Women for Women International, 2005; United Nations Development Fund for Women, 2005; Amnesty International, 2005a). The gradual restriction of women's mobility and the weakening of women's rights in the war-torn zones served opponents of the invasion as proof of its overall anti-democratic impact (Al-Ali & Pratt, 2009). At times this position was accompanied by laudatory references to women's rights

achievements during the Baath reign.<sup>63</sup> However, such statements largely ignored that Kurdish women in the north, Shiite women in the south and women returning from exile were in fact only now entering the Iraqi political stage after years of marginalization and persecution by the Baath regime. They opened new channels of communication and spaces for debate, and they championed women's rights within the framework of the transitional process. As a result of this intense advocacy, the Transitional Administrative Law of March 2004 allocated women twenty-five per cent of the seats in the National Assembly.

*Sticking to the road map -  
elections and the constitution in 2005*

In September 2003, the Iraqi Governing Council set up an interim government with twenty-five ministers and several commissions charged with the preparation of national elections and the draft of a new constitution. On 28 June 2004, the CPA handed over authority in Iraq to the Iraqi Transitional Government and was subsequently dissolved. Elections to the Transitional National Assembly were held on 31 January 2005 and, despite escalating violence and high-level security precautions, there was a strong turnout at the polls throughout the country. Several Sunni Arab political parties, however, boycotted the elections, and Sunni Arab electoral participation was as low as two per cent in the conflict province of Anbar. Hence the new, primarily Shia- and Kurdish-dominated Iraqi Government under Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jafari<sup>64</sup> lacked the legitimacy and authority to contain the on-going conflicts in the country. The Transitional National

**63** See for example the statements on <http://www.brussellstribunal.org/pdf/WomenUnderOccupation.pdf> (last accessed 1 April 2013).

**64** The elections resulted in a 48 per cent majority for the Shiite United Iraqi Alliance, followed by the Kurdish list, Democratic Patriotic Alliance of

Assembly set up a constitutional commission to draw up a new constitution, which was finally adopted by the Iraqi people in October 2005.

Debate on the constitution was controversial. A major dispute surrounded the issue of regional versus centralized power (Katzman, 2009). The idea of Iraq as a federal state was strongly supported by the Kurdish and some Shiite factions, but was rejected by other Shiite and Sunni Arab groups, who feared the disintegration of Iraq's territorial unity.

The future of Kirkuk and other disputed areas was likewise the subject of intense debate. A conflictive debate developed around the relationship between state and religion, the role of Islam and Sharia as the source of constitutional law and how to balance the constitution between compliance with International Human Rights and Law Standards and the need to address and include the traditional, religious and tribal values still fundamental to many in the rural areas and religious communities (Efrati, 2012). The disputes crossed ethnic, religious and regional borders, but simultaneously caused a rift in the blossoming national debate among women. Women's groups from Kurdistan met with Arab women from Baghdad and other mostly urban laic contexts, such as the Communist Party, to advocate for a laicistic constitution based on international law and human rights standards. At the same time a large number of Shia women struggled to assign a central role to the Sharia.<sup>65</sup>

The final draft of the constitution was a compromise. The preamble condemns past violence in Iraq, explicitly refers to previous gross human rights violations against Kurds, Shi-

Kurdistan, with 25 per cent and some 13 per cent for the Iraqi List of Prime Minister Ayad Allawi.

**65** From my own observation of and participation in network meetings on the constitution draft in Erbil and Sulaimania in 2004 and 2005; according to accounts from colleagues at the KHANZAD women's centre in Sulaimania, Iraqi Kurdistan, a women's round table discussion on the constitution draft held in Hillah in the summer of 2004 ended with women throwing shoes at each other.

ites, Yezidi, Assyrians, Turkmen and Sunni Arabs and confirms the multi-ethnic, democratic spirit of the New Iraq. Iraq was constituted as a Federal Republic and its regions were granted the right to constitute themselves as federal states. Each region has the constitutional right to organize its own internal police structures (Article 117); the Kurdish *peshmerga* forces became the regional security forces. To the disappointment of the Kurds, however, who had hoped for regional oil exploitation, oil revenue distribution was confined to the federal government (Article 109). A decision on Kirkuk and other disputed areas was postponed to a future referendum.

Twenty-five per cent of the seats in the National Assembly were reserved for women. The constitution itself remained ambivalent about the source of law: while it specifies compliance with International Human Rights and Law Standards in certain instances, the Sharia is named as a fundamental source of the Penal and Civil Codes. Furthermore, Paragraph 41 allows different regional and local interpretations of personal status law in accordance with local beliefs and customs.<sup>66</sup> Women's rights groups throughout Iraq strongly criticized that Paragraph 41 opened the door to multiple law interpretations and legitimized local and religious authorities as parallel structures to the state.<sup>67</sup>

The next round of elections in December 2005 brought about the instalment of a full-fledged Iraqi government in May 2006, again primarily made up of Shiite and Kurdish representatives under Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki of the Islamic Dawa Party. Jalal Talabani, leader of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, was appointed President of the country. Although Sunni participation was higher than in January 2005, Sunni Arabs continued to be underrepresented in the government.

**66** For the complete text of the Iraqi Constitution, see: [http://www.uniraq.org/documents/iraqi\\_constitution.pdf](http://www.uniraq.org/documents/iraqi_constitution.pdf) (last accessed 17 Oct. 2011).

**67** Compare, for example, Heinrich Böll Foundation: Interview with Hana'a Edwar, Iraqi al-Amal Association, July 2009 ([www.boell.de](http://www.boell.de)).

*Continuing political conflict*

Violence intensified in the years that followed. Under the leadership of Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, the Iraqi branch of al-Qaeda launched a series of suicide bomb attacks and ruthless hostage-taking. Civilians, and specifically Shias, were the prime target of these attacks, which claimed thousands of victims between 2004 and 2006. The Shiite militias, in turn, grew more potent. The February 2006 bomb attack against the Shia holy mosque in Samarra, which destroyed the golden dome, marked the beginning of open Shia-Sunni clashes and pushed Iraq to the verge of a sectarian war (International Crisis Group, 2006; Katzman, 2009; Eisenstadt, 2010).

In late 2006, a number of Sunni Arab tribal leaders from the conflict province of Anbar, unsettled by the dimensions and brutality of the insurgents' violence, which undercut their own local power base, gathered in so-called *sahwahs* (awakening councils), and rose up against al-Qaeda and its insurgent groups. Similarly, former insurgents switched loyalties and fought al-Qaeda under the name »Sons of Iraq«. These movements became a cornerstone of the subsequent major shift in US strategy, the so-called »Surge« adopted in early 2007 (International Crisis Group, 2008a and 2008b). Henceforth, Sunni tribal leaders and former insurgents were provided with arms and financial support and incorporated in US counterinsurgency operations. Simultaneously, US troops increased their presence in sensitive areas with a further 30,000 soldiers. Contrary to some predictions that greater military presence would lead to escalation of the conflict, the strategy worked. By 2008, bomb attacks and sectarian violence had declined significantly. In the same year, the USA signed a security agreement with the Iraqi government on the withdrawal of US forces from Iraq by the end of 2011. Efforts to train and equip Iraqi security forces now became a key operation.

At the same time, Prime Minister al-Maliki tried to present himself as a national rather than a Shia leader and set up the State of Law Coalition, an alliance of the Islamic

Dawa Party, secular and Sunni Arab groups and elements of the tribal Awakening Movement for the provincial elections in 2009 and the parliamentary elections in 2010.

After the elections and nine months of contentious debate al-Maliki was re-instated Prime Minister. Against all pretension of inclusiveness, in the years to follow al-Maliki's government developed into an autocratic regime, with himself being Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Interior Minister in one person. Under his reign the exclusion of Sunni Arab political factions from the political process and the marginalization of Sunni Arab population was exacerbated. Moreover, his government turned out oversized and ineffective in addressing the pressing needs of the population (Visser, 2010). In February 2010, prompted by the Arab spring in Tunisia and Egypt, thousands of Iraqis demonstrated in Basra, Baghdad and other cities against the corruption and the malfunctioning of the government.

After the withdrawal of US forces in 2011, violence and conflict intensified again with new waves of bomb attacks and violence shattering the country. At the end of 2012 thousands of Sunni Arabs in the province of Anbar demonstrated against the Shia dominated government and their political and social marginalization; yet their protests were brutally crushed by al-Maliki's security forces. The sectarian conflict was further fuelled by the civil war in Syria: while the Shia factions supported the Assad regime, Sunni political groups and tribal structures granted support to the insurgents. Also conflicts between the Kurdish regional government and the Iraqi government about the exploitation of Kurdish oil resources and the disputed areas intensified.

In 2014 the terror militias of the so called »Islamic State« took control on large parts of the Sunni Arab dominated province of Anbar and later brutally advanced to the province of Mossul. These developments cannot be addressed in this book; however the support and alliance the «Islamic State» found in parts of the Sunni Arab population cannot be understood without the background of sectarian conflict given above.

The ethnic-religious fragmentation of the Iraqi society has often been attributed to the impact of the invasion on Iraq in 2003 and the mistakes of the transitional administration in its aftermath. Indeed many Iraqis confirm that the sectarian and religious divide was not inherent in Iraqi society, but a US import. Based on my own experience of the post-war situation, I consider this view simplistic. Ethnic and religious dividing lines and animosities are equally the legacy of three decades of Baath dictatorship, which concentrated political power in the hands of the Sunni Arab minority, persecuted and marginalized Shias and Kurds and pressured Iraqis into a constructed Arab nationalism, for which the way had been paved in Iraq long before the Baath regime emerged (Ibrahim, 1997; Wimmer, 2003). The collapse of the regime raised the lid of the pressure cooker. The seething sectarian tension was fanned by the CPA but also by Iran, which endeavoured to widen its influence through the Shiite majority in Iraq, and by neighbouring Arab countries that supported the Sunni Arab struggle against occupation. The conflicts in Iraq today cannot be explained within the narrow frame of insurgency against occupation. Nor are they the result of sectarian strife alone. Political disputes cross religious boundaries and frequently lead to infighting among ethnic and religious groups. The political landscape of Iraq is marked by multi-layered acrimony over national and religious identities, local, regional and central power and the distribution of wealth. In addition, the widespread orientation towards narrow local and religious frameworks among today's Iraqis can be seen as a defence mechanism in the face of an overall climate of terror, perceived as a permanent feature of life in Iraq both before and after the invasion.

Against the background of on-going conflict and violence in Iraq, the debate on how to deal with a violent past - initially pushed forward by the US authorities, the Iraqi Interim Government, international organizations and local victim associations - has been dropped from the political agenda in favour of an inclusive political solution to current violence

and political disputes. Thus beyond the Iraqi Special Tribunal against Saddam Hussein and his close followers, no institutional steps have been taken to deal with the past (see also Chapter 12). While victims of crimes under the Baath regime continue to wait and to demand justice and compensation, they are in fact competing with the growing numbers of victims of recent violence, many of whom are former perpetrators and likewise demand assistance and recognition. Today's political debate in Iraq is marked by contrasting and conflicting memories, and the competitive victim discourses that underpin and further stoke political conflict.

### **3.6 Kurdistan-Iraq after 2003**

#### *Political stabilization*

While central and southern Iraq has been characterized by violence and political conflict since the fall of the Baath regime, the Kurdish region in Iraq has undergone a process of political stabilization and economic recovery.

The Iraqi constitution of 2005 paved the way for a Kurdish federal region within the Federal Republic of Iraq. Kurdistan's twelve years of quasi-autonomy - albeit in more precarious circumstances - now proved an advantage in setting up stable administrative and political structures, a police force and public services. The elections in 2005 to the Regional Kurdistan Parliament confirmed the dominance of the two main Kurdish parties, PUK and KDP, which continued to adopt the fifty-fifty power-sharing principle throughout the government and administrative apparatus. A regional constitution for Kurdistan was drafted and passed by parliament in June 2009, but has yet to be endorsed by a referendum. Article 1 of the draft states, that Kurdistan is constituted as a region within the federal state of Iraq. Article 21 asserts the equality of women and men, while Articles 23 and 106 guarantee thirty per cent of the seats in parliament and in local and municipal councils to women. Human rights and

Kurdish women's organizations, all of which had hoped for a strictly laic orientation of the Kurdish constitution and thus a cushioning of ambivalences in the Iraqi constitution, were nonetheless disappointed. While initial drafts explicitly prohibited discrimination against women and provided for their shelter in difficult social circumstances, these provisions were removed from the final draft as an obvious concession to the religious elite.<sup>68</sup> The paragraphs on law remained contradictory. Article 6 of the constitution reads:

This Constitution endorses and respects the Islamic identity of the majority of the people of Kurdistan-Iraq. It also upholds and respects all religious rights of the Christians, Yazidis, and others, and guarantees to every individual in the region freedom of belief and the freedom to practice their religious rites and rituals. It states the principles of Islamic Sharia as the basic source of legislation, and as such, it is not permitted to:

First: Enact a law that contradicts the established tenets of Islam. Second: Enact a law that contradicts the principles of democracy. Third: Enact a law that contradicts the rights and basic freedoms stipulated in this Constitution.<sup>69</sup>

This reflects the two-track policy pursued by the Kurdish Regional Government, i.e. the tightrope walk between being part of Federal Iraq and struggling for a solid share of the power at the national level, on the one hand, and the consolidation of quasi-state structures (Natali, 2010) with an eye to independence from Baghdad, on the other. The fifty-fifty power split between the Kurdish parties is likewise at work here. While the appointment of PUK leader Jalal Talabani as Iraqi President personified Kurdish claims for a central role at the national level, the President of the Kurdistan Region, KDP leader Massud Barzani, concentrates on Kurdish na-

**68** See the constitution draft from 22 Aug. 2006 in Kelly, 2010.

**69** Quoted from Max Planck Institute for Comparative Public Law and International Law: [http://www.mpil.de/shared/data/pdf/draft\\_of\\_a\\_constitution\\_for\\_kurdistan-engl.pdf](http://www.mpil.de/shared/data/pdf/draft_of_a_constitution_for_kurdistan-engl.pdf) (last accessed 17 Oct. 2011).

tional issues and the consolidation and extension of regional power. Thus, two contrasting tendencies among the Kurdish people are addressed: strong Kurdish nationalism and the long-cherished dream of an independent Kurdish state, overlaid by pragmatic considerations, such as Kurdistan's need for an Iraqi framework as a sound economic basis and the acknowledgement of the fact that a Kurdish state would enjoy neither regional nor international support.

Decades of marginalization and persecution have instilled in Kurdish society a deep sense of mistrust in the Iraqi central government, sustained by on-going violence and conflict since 2003. Today the Kurdish people of Iraq are largely alienated from the Iraqi national process and almost exclusively oriented towards a regional framework. With the exception of a short period of enthusiasm for and curiosity about the »rest of Iraq« in the direct aftermath of the invasion, national political processes generate little interest. The scant media coverage of national events reflects this indifference and at times alarming lack of concern about the violence and conflict that prevails in other regions.

The relationship between the Kurdistan Regional Government and the Federal Government of Iraq remains tense. The dispute over the oil- and gas-rich region of Kirkuk that hosts a population of Kurds, Arabs and Turkmen is far from settled. The referendum on the future of Kirkuk foreseen in the Iraqi constitution has been stalled. The Kurds have meanwhile underpinned their claim with the vast resettlement of previously displaced families to the Kirkuk region and the de facto installation of Kurdish administrative and police structures. The Iraqi government strongly objects to the Kurdish claims and at the same time fails to provide security and services to Kirkuk; Turkey has likewise attempted to assert its political influence under the pretext of safeguarding the Kirkuk Turkmen population. Ravaged by frequent bomb attacks and imbued with rising tension between Kurdish *peshmerga* forces and the Iraqi Federal Government, the so-called trigger line, today Kirkuk is a highly insecure place (International Crisis Group, 2006, 2009).

Another major point of conflict between the Kurdistan Regional Government and the central government in Baghdad is oil. The introduction of a national law to regulate the exploitation of Iraqi oil was delayed by disputes over contracts with international oil companies. Although in possession of vast oil resources, the Kurds lack the know-how and technology to exploit them. Consequently they are interested in so-called Production Sharing Agreements (PSA) with international companies, allowing the latter high profit-sharing and a say in price policies in return for refining technologies and equipment. Sunni Arab parties, the Iraqi Communist Party and oil workers unions in central and southern Iraq protest against what they consider the sell-out of Iraqi oil to multinational companies. The Kurds also object to the Baghdad Oil Ministry's control of oil exports and revenues. The conflict escalated when, in 2007, the Kurdistan Regional Government passed a regional oil law and signed joint venture contracts with French, Canadian and US companies to exploit Kurdish oil resources. In a harsh response to the Kurdish solo run, Baghdad declared the contracts illegal. The dispute has yet to be resolved (Muttitt, 2011).<sup>70</sup>

These simmering conflicts rekindle anti-Arab resentment in Kurdish society and the fear of submission yet again to a central Iraqi government. It strengthened ethnic-national discourses and the aspiration to a Kurdish independent state.

### *Economic recovery*

Kurdistan has enjoyed relative security since 2003 and undergone a process of rapid economic recovery and modernization. The seventeen per cent share of Iraqi national

**70** In September 2011, the Kurdistan Regional Ministry of Natural Resources published all current Production Sharing Agreements: <http://www.krg.org/pages/page.asp?lngnr=12&rn=296&PageNr=1> (last accessed 5 Nov. 2011).

revenues allocated to the Kurdish region enabled the Kurdistan Regional Government to invest in infrastructural programmes and public services.<sup>71</sup> Vast employment opportunities arose in the administrative, public service, and police and security sectors; nascent private construction, telecommunication, service and oil-exploitation sectors created additional opportunities. Cities such as Sulaimania and Erbil are now flourishing urban centres and keen to copy cities like Dubai in terms of architecture and consumer and leisure facilities.

### *Civil society advancement and internal opposition*

As early as the 1990s, civil society groups had begun to emerge in Iraqi Kurdistan, initially driven by international donors seeking NGO partners to implement humanitarian projects. Many of the then mushrooming NGOs were set up by the very same political parties in order to access international funds. Bernhard Winter (2002) used the term »Pongos« for describing this advance of party policies into the NGO sector. The late 1990s, however, saw the appearance of more genuine civil society actors and today Kurdistan has a diverse civil society landscape of initiatives engaged in human and women's rights issues and social and cultural matters. The local media scene is varied and meanwhile includes some media that are independent from political parties and the government. Thus, many perceive Kurdistan as an »island of democracy« in an Iraq ripped apart by violence.

Yet beneath this democratic surface, political power has remained concentrated in the hands of the two dominant parties, KDP and PUK. Both continued to prioritize consolidation of their individual party apparatus rather than delegate

**71** The 17 per cent share of the Iraqi budget allocated to the Kurdistan region amounted to US\$ 9.5 billion in 2011 (<http://www.rudaw.net/english/business/3493.html>)

power to regional government structures. Refraining from a fundamental structural reform of inflated administrative and government institutions, they opted instead for a fifty-fifty shared employment policy in the public and security sectors to satisfy their respective clientele. Kurdistan's police and military forces are still separate units, each loyal to the respective party. Party-affiliated companies control the private business sector, with leading politicians competing for a share in the profits of the oil and construction sectors. Party-affiliated television stations and newspapers monopolize the media sector, while independent media and civil society face censorship and repression whenever they target political parties and their power structures. Discontent over corruption and the abuse of power by the major parties increased steadily among the Kurdish population after 2003, particularly among intellectuals and civil society institutions and in rural areas such as Germyan, where the population feels outpaced in terms of infrastructure and social services as a result of a party focus on urban modernization projects.

Dissenting voices are also growing loud within the ranks of the PUK. In 2005, a number of former PUK officials under the leadership of Nawshirwan Mustafa Amin, *peshmerga* commander and leader of the left-wing KOMALA faction of the PUK in the 1970s and 1980s and a close adviser of Jalal Talabani in the 1990s, broke away from the PUK and founded the opposition movement Goran (Kurdish: change).<sup>72</sup> Goran channelled the smouldering unease of the Kurdish people by demanding that the regional government make government budgeting transparent, downsize the administrative and government apparatus, strengthen the role of parliament and the government and fight corruption. Goran gained twenty-three per cent of the seats in the Kurdistan Regional Parliament in the first run-off in the 2009 regional

**72** Tellingly, Goran began by establishing a media company and launching several television stations and newspapers.

elections, as well as majority votes in former PUK strongholds such as Sulaimania and the Germyan region. Although many doubt that Goran's leadership – itself spawned from the PUK apparatus – is seriously committed to democratic reforms, the movement has succeeded in generating new spaces for critical debate on the future of the Kurdistan region in the media, the parliament and society in general, and it has broadened the scope of action for civil society structures.

Shocked at the unexpected challenge to their hitherto leading roles, the KDP and PUK accelerated the granting of welfare programmes to their clientele and accused Goran of dividing the Kurdish nation, and – in view of the latter's announced intention to run in the Iraqi national elections in 2010 with its own list – of weakening the Kurdish position at the national level.

In February 2011, encouraged by the rebellions in Egypt and Tunisia, the young in particular demonstrated in several Kurdish cities against corruption and for democratic reforms. The protests turned into violent clashes when KDP gunmen opened fire on demonstrators in Sulaimania; the subsequent large protests were gunned down by Kurdish military and police forces. What had promised to be a »Kurdish spring« and the harbinger of democratization once again lapsed into a KDP-PUK feud, with each party accusing the other of incompetence in the face of unrest. When the US troops withdrew at the end of 2011 and conflict with the Iraqi central government intensified, however, fear of external pressure on the Kurdish region once again took precedence over the internal Kurdish debate on democracy and reforms.

### *Women in Iraqi Kurdistan*

The Kurdish region prides itself on the active role of women in politics and society. Indeed, women's mobility and access to public space has gradually increased since the 1990s, and women, most of them unveiled, are well represented in pub-

lic life, particularly in the urban centres. They have access to higher education and professional careers in the government and private sectors, although key positions in government and the real centres of power – the party politburos – remain male-dominated.<sup>73</sup>

Since the late 1990s, independent women's groups emerged alongside party-affiliated women's organizations; addressed issues such as violence against women, honour killing and female genital mutilation, all of which were hitherto taboo, and established counselling and shelter projects. As a result of this advocacy, the Kurdistan Regional Government introduced a number of pioneering legal reforms. The mitigation of punishment for honour killings foreseen in the Iraqi penal code of 1969,<sup>74</sup> for example, has been amended for the Kurdish region. The civil law reform in 2009 reinforced the right of women to child custody and divorce and laid down a series of restrictions on polygamy. In July 2011 the Kurdistan Regional Parliament passed a comprehensive law against domestic violence, making provision for the prosecution of female genital mutilation and various forms of domestic violence, including the denial of education (Human Rights Watch, 2011). Protective mechanisms for women under threat were put in place, and local police cooperate with women's shelter and counselling projects.

**73** In the seventh cabinet of the Kurdistan Regional Government (2009-2014) Asos Najeeb, Minister for Labour and Social Affairs, was the only woman appointed; in the current twenty-three member cabinet only the Ministry of Municipalities and Tourism is held by a woman: Mrs. Newroz Mawlud Amin. In December 2010, Chnar Saad Abdullah became the first female member of the DPK politburo. Hero Ibrahim Ahmed, wife of Jalal Talabani, is the only female member of the PUK politburo.

**74** Article 408, Iraqi Penal Code, 1969, see the comments of the Iraqi Organization for Human Rights Coordination (2008): How the Current Iraqi Valid Penal Code no. 111 for 1969 Is Conforming To Human Rights International Standards. Available at: [http://www.iccnw.org/documents/Iraqi\\_Valid\\_Penal\\_Code\\_EN\\_-\\_Hasan\\_Ukaily.pdf](http://www.iccnw.org/documents/Iraqi_Valid_Penal_Code_EN_-_Hasan_Ukaily.pdf) (last accessed 1 April 2013).

This progress, however, has met with the resistance of deep-rooted traditional and religious structures, not least in the rural areas of Iraqi Kurdistan. While women in the urban centres meanwhile have access to legal assistance and social counselling, women in the rural areas, where traditional structures compete with government institutions, are still largely subjected to forced marriages and violence and are the target of honour killings when they challenge male authority or violate the traditional code of honour and shame. Female genital mutilation is still widespread in several areas (Faraj Rahim, 2005; Human Rights Watch, 2010; WADI, 2010).

Urban women's lives are likewise marked by the sharp contrast between their active role in social, professional and cultural life and the persistent patriarchal and traditional code of honour within the confines of the family. Women with responsible positions in companies or government institutions remain subordinate to the male members of their family in their personal lives and choice of partner. Family honour is defined in terms of female chastity and so-called shameful behaviour. There is no social acceptance for women with life concepts beyond the realm of marriage or life with their parental families. Thus, honour killings and violence against women are phenomena in both rural and urban contexts in Iraqi Kurdistan (Faraj Rahim & Shwan, 2004; Begikhani et al., 2010).<sup>75</sup>

**75** See also the websites HAUKARI: [www.haukari.de](http://www.haukari.de); WADI: [www.wadi-online.de](http://www.wadi-online.de); and ASUDA ([www.asuda.org](http://www.asuda.org)), Kurdish Women Action against Honour Killings (KWAHK): [www.kwahk.org](http://www.kwahk.org).



## 4 Research access, methodology and material

My research focuses on women Anfal survivors in the Germyan region, more specifically in the former Sumud collective camp that lies between Kalar and Kifri in the southeast corner of the Kurdish-administered region and has meanwhile been renamed Rizgary. The findings are based on my longstanding working experience in humanitarian and psychosocial aid projects in Iraqi Kurdistan since 1991 and more precisely in the Germyan region since 1993, on my research activities among women Anfal survivors since 1999 and, finally, on bonds with many Anfal families in Germyan through my husband, who originally comes from the area. I speak fluent Kurdish (Sorani)<sup>76</sup>, read Kurdish publications and understand the local Germyan dialect.

My diverse experience has given me intimate insight into the situation of Anfal women and the opportunity to observe how their situation has changed over a span of twenty years. This wide spectrum of experience and material posed a methodological challenge in preparing this thesis. I encountered women Anfal survivors as an aid worker, as a family member/friend/neighbour, as a researcher and ultimately

**76** There are several Kurdish dialects. Kurds in Turkey speak Kurmanci, which uses Latin letters. Syrian Kurds also speak Kurmanci, but write in Arabic letters. Kurds in Iraq generally write in Arabic and speak the Badini dialect in the province of Duhok and Sorani in the provinces of Erbil/Hawler and Sulaimania. Again, accents differ among the Sorani-speaking population, depending on the region. Kurds in Iran speak Sorani in the regions bordering Iraq, and Kurmanci in the regions close to Turkey.

as a lobbyist for them, and at various times I have focused on various aspects of their lives. How could I effectively structure in retrospect the vast amount of material I had gathered? Semi-structured and biographical interviews for research purposes, interviews conducted in work contexts, minutes and project reports, personal notes and considerations from participant observation (or observing participation) and information from secondary sources were some of the documents I had accumulated. How could I scientifically substantiate what had grown to be an almost intuitively shared knowledge acquired over the last twenty years?

I have taken recourse exclusively to qualitative methods for the collection and analysis of empirical material. It was not my intention to collect quantitative data or look for clinical symptoms of trauma. My research aim is to understand the experience of violence and the complex life situation of Anfal women in the aftermath, to explore their social realities, i.e. their social, political, economic and gendered context, and show how their narratives and coping strategies transformed with the changes that have taken place in the last two decades. The research is subject-centred and agency-focused: the perspective of Anfal women is at the heart of my research. I have tried to understand them as individuals and as actors in their specific historical, social and political context and to structure my research in terms of what they define as their most salient challenges.

I see the research process as a reciprocal relation between researcher and the researched subjects, in which both sides learn to understand their different situations and to develop possibilities for agency. My research goal is to point out avenues for individual and social change, rather than to simply document the lives of women Anfal survivors.

In this chapter, I first describe my lines of access to Anfal women in Gernyan and reflect on my own involvement and my own biases. This is followed by a description of my methodological framework and points of reference, specifically addressing the challenges associated with interviewing survivors of extreme violence.

## 4.1 Personal access and biases

### *Working with Anfal survivors*

I first arrived in Iraqi Kurdistan in December 1991 in the aftermath of the first US-led invasion of Iraq, three years after the murderous Anfal Campaign had ended. My working context was in projects set up by the German NGO medico international for the reconstruction and resettlement of the devastated Kurdish rural areas. My decision to join the mission was driven largely by curiosity. I had taken part in political protests in Germany against the US-led invasion of Iraq and had been deeply puzzled by meeting Iraqi Kurds in Berlin who welcomed the military coup with great enthusiasm and harshly criticized our anti-war protests as a lack of attention to their fate. I had seen the television images of the exodus of two million Kurds from Iraq across the Iranian and Turkish borders after the Baath regime had crushed their uprising, despite international promises of protection and assistance. I was curious to see the situation with my very eyes to understand better. Nothing had prepared me, however, for the degree of destruction and suffering I witnessed upon arrival. The rural villages along the Turkish and Iranian borders had been razed to the ground and become a ghost landscape of debris and decay. The entire Kurdish region resembled a massive refugee camp: hundred thousands of displaced persons lived in the collective towns erected by the Baath regime during the 1970s and 1980s; thousands of families recently displaced from Kirkuk and other Kurdish cities under Baathist control were housed in newly erected refugee camps or provisional shelters close to the Kurdish cities of Sulaimania, Erbil and Duhok. Two million Kurds, i.e. almost sixty per cent of the Kurdish population in Iraq, had fled to Iran or Turkey and were now gradually returning. The recent experience of betrayal by their alleged US and international allies, of abuse and rejection at the Turkish border, of panic, hunger, exhaustion and loss in the course of their escape added to the

already multiple layers of suffering from previous decades of violence. The rural population in particular had gone through displacement and deportation, often several times, and suffered from numerous waves of political violence before, during and after the Anfal catastrophe and the poison gas attack on Halabja. In addition, they mourned the loss of many of their relatives and friends. This ocean of suffering and destruction contrasted with the elation of the Kurds at the withdrawal of Iraqi troops and at the historical opportunity to gain autonomy status, albeit one that was both fragile and provisional and by no means secured by UN troops or international guarantees. As international aid workers, we were welcomed with enthusiasm by the local population, who saw us as a symbol of the long-awaited international focus on their plight and as guarantors of security - a role we were clearly unable to fulfil.

The ambivalent international policy towards Iraq and Kurdistan - no infringement of Iraqi integrity or of Baath regime legitimacy, on the one hand, and the channelling of massive humanitarian assistance to Iraqi Kurdistan without recognizing its autonomy or administration, on the other - translated into a half-hearted aid policy. Since international sanctions applied also to the Kurdistan region, humanitarian assistance from abroad was confined to short-term emergency aid rather than long-term infrastructural support. This policy hindered the reconstruction of Kurdistan, i.e. of its infrastructure and its economic and administrative systems. It also put international aid workers in a difficult and highly dangerous position. Until the launch of the UN Oil-for-Food Programme in 1998, international humanitarian aid programmes remained one of the few resources in the Kurdish region. International NGOs had considerable local influence and were often exploited by their respective donor governments as shadow embassies and unofficial foreign policy actors. They were caught regularly in the crossfire of Kurdish political parties and the latter's rivalry in the strug-

gle for a greater share of power.<sup>77</sup> Since the Baath regime considered the presence of international NGOs in Kurdistan illegal, they were welcome targets for Baathist hit squads. Several of our international colleagues were murdered in the course of their humanitarian or journalistic work in the 1990s.<sup>78</sup> As a result, we were obliged to travel accompanied by bodyguards and armoured cars, the so-called gunships.

International aid programmes focused on reconstructing the rural areas and hence on resettling the displaced and re-launching agricultural production. This corresponded to the priority of the Kurdish political parties and the regional government, which was to dissolve the refugee camps and collective towns as soon as possible.

In 1991/1992, I worked in the medico international emergency aid programme for the inhabitants of the Pishder region on the Iran-Iraq border, many of whom had been deported after their villages and several district towns were destroyed in 1974, when the Baath regime evacuated a thirty-kilometre-wide strip along the Iranian border. We distributed food rations, building materials and agricultural start-up packages to returnees from Iran and Turkey. In 1992, we introduced a three-year resettlement programme in roughly twenty villages and district towns in the rural region of Qaradagh, to the west of Sulaimania, which had been badly affected by poison gas attacks and completely destroyed during the second stage of the Anfal Campaign in March 1988. We received funds from the German government and managed to extend the narrow emergency aid concept to a more integrated resettlement programme that included the reconstruction of access roads, schools,

**77** The impact of this international policy on the Kurdistan region in the 1990s is described in detail by Winter (2002).

**78** Among them was Lissy Schmidt, a journalist committed to the Kurdish cause for years and a former staff member of medico international. She and her Kurdish bodyguard were shot on the road between Sulaimania and Penjween in April 1994 (van der Stoel, 1994).

health centres and administrative buildings in restored villages. With this integrated rehabilitation concept, we also implemented various projects in the Germyan region, first in fifteen villages between Derbendikhan and Bawanoor in 1995 and later in the remote area of Bnari Gil and Dawde in the extreme southeast of the Kurdish-administered region, close to the then Iraqi-Kurdish frontline.<sup>79</sup> The latter region was razed to the ground during the third Anfal operation in April 1988, leaving little trace of the villages or of human life; most of the survivors were now scattered throughout the resettlement complex of Sumud.

Before launching a resettlement programme, we would first meet the villagers concerned and assess their willingness to return to their original villages and their attendant needs. Parallel to rebuilding the village infrastructure, we distributed construction materials, agricultural tools, seed and food rations to families who were ready to return to their home villages on condition that they were prepared to demolish their houses in the collective towns. This thrust met with the Kurdish government's and parties' intent to accelerate the dismantling of collective towns and refugee shelters. Dozens of local and international NGOs were involved in this major rural rehabilitation enterprise, all of them busy with coordination and planning meetings, purchasing and transporting building materials, possibly »bypassing sanction rules«, constructing bridges, roads, and water and sanitation facilities and discussing energy-efficient methods of housing construction. Our zeal was curbed, however, by hesitant Anfal survivors who, fearful of returning to the scene of aggression, requested safety guarantees. They were not eager to return to their former pastoral village life. Instead of restoring old village structures, they requested modernization. Today, in retrospect,

**79** I was involved in this project as an advisor to the implementing Kurdish NGO, KRS. The programme was funded by the Norwegian government and the Norwegian NGO, Norwegian People's Aid (NPA).

I am surprised at how little we discussed the psychological challenge our rural reconstruction programme and encouragement to return to the places where their ordeal began posed to those who had only recently survived massive violence and were still absorbed in processes of mourning. The »psychological turn« in the aid and development sector had not yet occurred; there were no trauma experts and I cannot remember trauma as a topic in any of our coordination meetings. We discussed reconstruction and simply made the »hardware« available. It could be argued - heretically - that what appears insensitive in hindsight may actually have helped to stabilize many survivor families without the therapeutic intervention of trauma experts.

The concept of accelerated rural reconstruction nonetheless proved successful; and despite the provisional political frame and on-going conflict in the region, UN-coordinated resettlement programmes in the devastated rural areas are one of the success stories in the region. Within a few years, the rural areas in the Kurdish-controlled region of northern Iraq had been reconstructed to a great extent. The strong focus on rural resettlement, on the one hand, and the simultaneous absence of investment in infrastructural measures in collective towns and camps for displaced people, on the other hand, was, however, a policy that failed to recognize the situation of those unable to leave the camps and return to their villages, e.g., families whose home villages were outside the Kurdish-administered region and still under Iraqi control, elderly men whose entire families had disappeared and who were now left without family support and the large group of women survivors whose husbands and possibly other male relatives were missing and who now lacked male support and protection for a return to their villages. Kurdish society and international organizations referred to these women as *bewa-jin-î Anfal* or Anfal widows.

Most of these women were reluctant to go back to their villages. They declared their unwillingness to return to the scene of terror; they could not survive in the village without a labour force or male protection; they were unable to

access their property without male relatives. Some claimed they did not want their children to be brought up in the village, without access to education and a more promising future. Specific incentives for women in our resettlement projects, e.g., payment for labour in construction or agricultural work, proved unsuccessful, as did attempts to involve the women in long-term projects such as micro-credit programmes, income-generating projects and educational initiatives in collective towns. Rejecting long-term initiatives, they used their energy instead to travel to sites where goods were distributed. Indeed, some Anfal women became the aid worker's »nightmare«. They refused to comply with the conditions of resettlement programmes and turned up randomly at distribution points for construction material, medicine, agricultural tools, or sheep and goats. They changed identities and stories depending on the distribution criteria and subsequently sold the goods to survive for a few more days or a few more weeks. These incidents compelled me to take a closer look at their psychosocial situation and attempt to understand their activities, which ultimately perpetuated the provisional nature of their lives. In the resettlement project in the Bnari Gil and Dawde region, we assessed the women's situation and their needs by means of meetings, home visits and consultations with local health and education workers and set up mobile social teams to address the women individually in their homes and to offer assistance. This support was logistic rather than psychological and served to help them with pension applications or administrative and legal problems.

When in 1995/1996, medico international withdrew from Iraqi Kurdistan, we, a group of German and Kurdish colleagues and friends, founded the German-based NGO HAUKARI (Kurdish: solidarity) in order to continue our work in Kurdistan and lobby for a political solution in the region at the international level. At the time, international engagement in northern Iraq had dropped significantly. This was partly due to the UN Oil-for-Food Agreement and subsequent improvement of supplies in the area. For the most part, however,

it was a response to the internal war that erupted between the PUK and the KDP, the two dominant Kurdish parties, and the deterioration of security in the area. This culminated in the Baath regime's attempt to re-invade the Kurdish administered region in August 1996. International donors ceased funding. Turkey, which had hitherto granted international aid workers transit to Iraq, closed its border. As a result, Kurdistan became even more isolated and was furthermore split into two separate regions controlled by the respective parties.

HAUKARI has been continuously working in Kurdistan-Iraq since 1995 with a focus on women empowerment and assistance to victims of violence.<sup>80</sup> I was in Germany when the US-led invasion of Iraq began in March 2003 and watched the demise of the Baath regime on television, symbolized by the toppling of the Saddam Hussein statue in Firdos Square in Baghdad on 9 April.<sup>81</sup> HAUKARI adopted a nuanced position on the war in its media statements. We shared the anti-war movement's objection to the military invasion of Iraq for the purpose of a share in the region's oil. At the same time, we criticized its tendency to downplay the brutality of the Baath dictatorship and its crimes and endeavoured to convey the position of our longstanding Kurdish partners

**80** In 1996 HAUKARI founded the KHANZAD social and cultural centre for women. It was then the first non-partisan women's centre in Iraqi Kurdistan, focusing initially on women's education (literacy), and social and legal counselling. At the end of the 1990s, KHANZAD engaged in the public debate on honour killings and violence against women, and is now a counselling centre for women in crisis. KHANZAD assists women and young people in Sulaimania prisons during and after detention, trains police and security staff, and advocates for social and legal reforms to extend the scope of women's mobility, and their social and political participation (for more details see [www.haukari.de](http://www.haukari.de), [www.khanzad.org](http://www.khanzad.org)).

**81** Evidence has meanwhile emerged that the scene was staged by a small group of people backed by US soldiers and hyped by the media into a historic moment of mass mobilization (see, for example, Maass in *The New Yorker*, 10 Jan. 2011). This knowledge, however, cannot erase the powerful symbolism of the event and its impact around the world.

and friends, all of whom welcomed and actively supported the invasion.

Despite my criticism of the invasion, I shared the Kurds' enthusiasm at the collapse of the regime and the termination of three decades of terror. Three months later, I travelled to Iraq and for the first time left the Kurdish-administered area to journey to Kirkuk and Baghdad. Given today's ongoing violence and conflict, it is easy to overlook the time slot of relative security and of hope for a democratic, multi-ethnic Iraq that followed the fall of the Baath regime. On my visit to Baghdad in 2003, I came into contact with initiatives launched by ex-prisoners and victims of the regime, as well as with UN and US officials and their Iraqi counterparts in discussions of strategies to secure the opening of mass graves and to bring the perpetrators to justice. I was full of optimism that the time had come for evidence, justice and dialogue between Anfal survivors and other victim groups in Iraq. Driven by this confidence, HAUKARI went about assessing the situation of Anfal survivors living in the areas under Iraqi control up to 2003. In 2004, we established a counselling centre for victims of political violence in the city of Tuz Khurmatu. Tuz Khurmatu lies in the district of Tikrit, Saddam Hussein's native town and a former Baath regime stronghold. It has a multi-ethnic population (40 per cent Shiite Turkmens, 30 per cent Sunni Arabs and 30 per cent Kurds). The aim of our centre, *As-Salam Centre* (Peace Centre), was to give psychological, social, educational and medical support to victims of political violence. This applied to all ethnic and religious groups, as well as to victims of raids and detainment carried out by US occupation forces. The idea was to promote dialogue and understanding between the different victims groups. Our optimistic and ambitious endeavour was of short duration. The centre was forced to close two years later, in 2006, due to worsening security in the region and to continuous rivalry and conflict among the various victim groups who attended the centre (Mlodoch, 2006). Chapter 12 outlines the experience at the centre in greater detail.

HAUKARI continued, however, its support of Anfal survivors in Sumud/Rizgary. On the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of Anfal in 2008, HAUKARI invited two Anfal women from Sumud/Rizgary to Germany. They gave testimony on Anfal at public meetings and visited memorial sites for victims of the Nazi regime and the Holocaust. When they returned to Kurdistan, they established an initiative for a self-designed and self-administered memorial site in Sumud/Rizgary that would represent their specific experience as women during and after Anfal and serve as a site of »symbolic closure« and exchange. Since then, some one hundred Anfal women have met regularly and translated their individual and collective memories into design proposals for the memorial site, discussed them with local artists and architects and lobbied the Kurdistan Regional Government for the construction of the memorial. HAUKARI supports the project with funds from the German Foreign Office and organizes exchange visits to German and European memorial sites and dialogue with memory artists and initiatives. I am actively involved in an advisory capacity with the Anfal women's project committee, as well as in advocacy and networking activities for the project in Germany. The project itself combines psychological support for women's memory work with empowerment and advocacy, encouraging women to speak out and engage in the public debate on Anfal. My work experience in the project fed heavily into my research, adding multiple observations and substantial material.

Large sections of my thesis are based on my working experience in Germany with Anfal women, and consequently on participant observation and observing participation. Some observations are documented in writing in the form of project reports and evaluations, interviews with project beneficiaries, minutes of project meetings and notes taken in the course of my work or at informal meetings.

*Personal and family access*

My second »line of access« to the Germyan region and the survivors of Anfal is highly personal. I met my then future husband, Jamal Ibrahim, known as Mam Pola, in 1993 in Iraqi Kurdistan. He is a native of a village close to the town of Kifri, which was destroyed prior to the Anfal Campaign. He is well-known and highly respected in the Germyan area for both his active role in the resistance in the 1980s and his continuous commitment to Anfal survivors to this day.

My marriage altered my position among the Anfal survivors I worked with: originally an external aid worker, I had now become a *bûk-î Germyan* – a Germyan bride. The term *buk* means both bride and daughter-in-law; it is used by the extended family to refer to a female in-law; it can also be translated as »doll«. I had enjoyed a certain amount of »behavioural freedom« before my marriage. Unintended violations of the moral code, the dress code or local traditions were »excused« and accepted because I was a »European«. During my first years in Iraqi Kurdistan, I was in fact frequently assigned to the men's area when I attended gender-separated meetings or festivities. It was assumed that as an international aid worker I had legitimate »business« with the men rather than the women. This changed abruptly when I got married. Violations of moral and traditional codes would henceforth no longer be my own business, but damage the honour of my husband and his extended family. My place was now with the women, who taught me the local rules and supervised my compliance. My marriage and the attendant family bonds paved the way for multiple insights into the life of Anfal women in Germyan. I became close friends with some of the women in Sumud/Rizgary, sharing their lives over the long period of hardship and external threat. What I learned from them in countless shared days and nights constitutes the backbone or golden thread of this thesis.

Family involvement and friendships, on the one hand, and on-going access to international institutions, funding and the media, on the other, was at times quite a load on my shoulders:

Anfal survivors in Sumud/Rizgary saw me as their ambassador vis-à-vis the government and international organizations and at international conferences. In the course of preparing for this thesis, their expectation of my advocacy and my own sense of obligation towards them constituted a mental block on many occasions.

### *Research activities*

In 1999/2000, I started to conduct psychological research on Anfal women in a narrower sense, then in preparation of my diploma thesis at the Psychological Institute of the Free University of Berlin. Based on my work experience and semi-structured interviews with Anfal women in the German region, I explored how uncertainty about the fate of their relatives prolonged their psychological suffering in the aftermath of Anfal. I also examined how their coping strategies - particularly those of women whose husbands had disappeared - were constrained by gender concepts and the traditional patriarchal environment, as well as by poverty and political instability (Mlodoch, 2000). This research activity was both a starting and a reference point for my current thesis. Reworked and updated, it constituted the basis for comparison with more recent material and observations, thus allowing me to analyze the changes that had occurred in the lives of the women in question. My research results have been regularly updated for publications or conferences since 2000 (Mlodoch, 2006, 2011, 2012a, 2012b), based on my continuing practical work before and after the regime change, as well as on the evaluation of semi-structured, audio-visual interviews with male and female Anfal survivors in German, carried out between 2002 and 2004 for a testimony archive project launched by HAUKARI. Parts of the interviews were later used for a documentary film on Anfal survivors (HAUKARI e.V., 2006).

In 2008 I launched the research project »Violence, Memory and Dealing with the Past: The example of Anfal Surviv-

ing Women in Kurdistan« at the Zentrum Moderner Orient (ZMO) in Berlin, an interdisciplinary research institute where historians, anthropologists and scholars of Islamic Studies focus on Muslim societies. At the same time, I enrolled as a Ph.D. student at the Institute of Social Psychology, Ethno-psychoanalysis and Psychotraumatology of the University of Klagenfurt in Austria. My discussion there with Professor Reddemann and my supervisor Professor Ottomeyer about their rich experience in trauma work, coupled with interdisciplinary exchange with my ZMO colleagues on memory research and policy, fed greatly into my research and gave theoretical orientation to the fieldwork for my thesis. From 2008 to 2011, I again conducted systematic interviews with Anfal women (and men), this time focusing on the transformation of their memories, narratives and coping strategies as a result of the changing realities in Iraqi Kurdistan after the fall of the Baath regime.

At this point, the Anfal Women Memorial Forum Project in Sumud/Rizgary acted as a synthesis of theory and practice, of academic research and practical work. The combination of research activities and practical work has been crucial for various reasons. Firstly, the project was an ideal forum for collecting the memories and narratives of Anfal women and examining their relevance and possible tensions in relation to social, political and public Anfal discourses. At the same time, my research in turn generated fruitful suggestions for the project design and its progress. In-depth interviews with Anfal conducted for my research helped me and my colleagues address the needs and expectations of the women in our project work more appropriately. Secondly, on a more personal level, I doubt that I could have dealt with the women's countless stories of violence, pain and grief if the purpose had merely been research and documentation. Engaging with Anfal women in a joint working process aimed at creating individual and social change, and gradually becoming aware of their active side, their courage and pride, has been a source of consolation and encouragement

in the face of the destructive impact of violence throughout these years.

## 4.2 Methodological framework

### *Mayring's qualitative content analysis*

To collect, structure and analyze the variety and vast amount of material, I take recourse mostly to the methodological framework of qualitative content analysis as proposed by Mayring (2000). Mayring developed this method in the 1970s and 1980s in the context of the then intense and highly critical debate on the role of the social sciences as social and political control instruments and thus as a pillar of the capitalist system. Quantitative standardized methods were criticized for decontextualizing and dehumanizing complex human behaviour by reducing it to mere statistical data. Subject- and agency-centred emancipatory approaches and qualitative methods emerged primarily in the field of psychology and sociology. Holzkamp (1985) and others founded the School of Critical Psychology in Berlin, causing the Psychological Institute at the Free University of Berlin to split into a Marxist-oriented Critical Psychology Institute - where I began my studies in 1980 - and one that we derogatively referred to as the »Institute of Bourgeois Psychology«, which adhered to traditional concepts. The subject-scientific and agency-centred approach of Critical Psychology, the concept of psychological research and praxis as agent for social change and the combination of psychological and political action impacted strongly on my approach and this thesis.

In the context of the »qualitative turn«, Mayring developed analytical tools for a methodologically controlled and, as such, reliable and valid analysis of complex social and psychological processes that would compensate for the latent tendency in qualitative methods towards subjectivism and arbitrariness. Mayring built on the subject-scientific

methodology of Critical Psychology and qualitative methods like the Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The research process is understood as communicative interaction between the researcher and the research subject. While building methodologically on quantitative content analysis in communication sciences, qualitative content analysis goes beyond the focus on formal aspects of communication in an attempt to comprehend the meanings underlying text and speech, including psychoanalytical and psychodynamic techniques of understanding. Thus, qualitative content analysis endeavours to combine the subjective interpretation of information and data with a reliable and verifiable systematic process of codifying data and identifying categories and patterns. »It allows researchers to understand social reality in a subjective but scientific manner.« (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009, p. 1).

Qualitative content analysis can be applied to a variety of spoken and written material. Categories, themes and patterns of analysis are first developed inductively from the material itself; they therefore emerge from and are grounded in the relevant data. The material is then codified by category; more precisely, passages of speech and text are assigned to categories. Secondary sources are used to enrich the categories.

Codification is designed as a continuous process in which new categories can potentially emerge. What follows is the subjective interpretation of the material, whereby categories are explored, compared and linked in an attempt to understand the underlying patterns, themes and problems. The findings are presented in a report that combines description and interpretation, enhanced by as much context as possible. The report should give »sufficient description to allow the reader to understand the basis for an interpretation, and sufficient interpretation to allow the reader to understand the description« (Patton, 2002, quoted from Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009, p. 5). For reliability, it should include reflections on the researcher's underlying assumptions, his or her approach to and involvement with the subject, and

detailed documentation of the material and analysis procedures. Results should be validated in communication with the research subjects.

I do not claim to have minutely followed the procedures of qualitative content analysis as advocated by Mayring. Apart from interview transcriptions, I wrote down as many observations as possible from my work experience, informal meetings and conversations with Anfal women, sometimes in detail, at other times merely notes. I then structured the material in categories corresponding to the various facets of the lives of Anfal women, as they emerged in their narratives and from my own observations, i.e. economic, social, psychological and gender aspects. As for the material collected before 2000, I referred to structures and categories originally developed for my diploma dissertation, now reworked and amended in the light of new material. For the material collected from 2008 to 2012, I introduced new categories, such as economic and social change and how the Iraqi national and Kurdistan regional discourses on past crimes and on Anfal impacted the women's situation and narratives. Passages from text and speech were allotted to the respective categories, to which I added information from secondary and media sources. I repeated this process several times, interpreting data and drawing conclusions.

A specific methodological challenge was, as mentioned above, to retrospectively structure the vast amount of material collected at different time periods from different perspectives. In addition, there are different axes along which to structure and unfold the »story« of the Anfal women, all equally important for a multi-layered picture of women Anfal survivors and their situation. My first aim is to approach women Anfal survivors individually, to contextualize their life stories, and within this social context to present them as both suffering persons and as actors. Secondly, I elaborate the social, political, economic and gender categories that shape the women's lives and their coping strategies. Thirdly, I explore how their suffering and coping has been transformed along a time line of more than twenty years.

My thesis combines the three structural axes of biography, category and time line, an approach that unavoidably leads to repetition and, at times, to anticipations and jumps in chronology.

At the same time, the variety and diversity of materials and data collected allowed me to examine my research subject - with reference to the triangulation method (Flick, 2007; Mayring, 2000) - from different perspectives and with different assumptions and such cross check the validity of my findings. I carefully reflected my own biases and involvements, as well as the impact of my role on the research situation and the research data. Where relevant, my own biases and possible alternative interpretations and references are commented on in the thesis.

For further validation, I checked my interpretations against colleagues working on other topics in the context of Iraqi Kurdistan and with several Kurdish colleagues involved in political and sociological research on Anfal and work with Anfal survivors.

For the communicative validation of research with research subjects, Flick (2000) suggests that the latter be given interview transcripts but not analytical findings. Fahl and Markard (1993) recommend that the interviewees revise the transcripts themselves to ensure correspondence with their own intentions. Mayring (2000), on the other hand, advises the researcher to reach a consensus with the research subject on the results of the analysis. Since most Anfal women are illiterate and my transcripts and analysis were written in English, it was not an option to hand over written material to the women. Instead, I discussed the findings of my thesis with those women who played a prominent role and/or with whom I have a close working relationship. I particularly touched on quoted narratives in order to check their correct use and interpretation. I also paid special attention to quotes that broached the taboo issues of sexual violence or those that might compromise the women and their families or their local environment.

### 4.3 The interviews - methodological approach and considerations

#### *Bourdieu's »Understanding«*

Narrative interviews with women Anfal survivors are vital to my research and for understanding the first-person perspective of the women on their experience of violence, their coping strategies and range of agency. In the following, I will detail my approach to the interview situation and the relevant theoretical and methodological references, and subsequently explain the interview procedure used with women Anfal survivors.

Bourdieu's concept of *understanding* was a key reference point in my approach to and analysis of the interviews. In *La Misère du Monde (The Weight of the World. Social Suffering in Contemporary Society)*, Bourdieu and a collective of seventeen co-authors (Bourdieu et al., 1993) offered a multi-layered socio-analysis of French society by presenting some nine hundred pages of interviews with French citizens from different cultural and educational backgrounds and social strata, amended only by some analytical reflections by the authors. The reference to Spinoza's »I have striven not to laugh at human actions, not to weep at them, nor to hate them but to understand them« (Bourdieu, 1999, p. 1) is a leitmotif of the volume, which broke with the assumption that it was possible to deal with interview material merely as data and arrive at analytic objectivity (Schriefers, 2008, p. 57). Instead of looking at the researcher's subjectivity as a disturbing factor, the authors consciously depart from the objective-observer standpoint, defining the interview situation instead as a social relationship and an exchange of linguistic and symbolic goods (Schriefers, 2008, p. 60). In the volume's chapter *Understanding*, Bourdieu underlines the *symbolic violence* and power relations inherent in communication processes and interviews where cultural, educational, social and linguistic differences exist between the partners and the interviewer determines the setting. The researcher

should acknowledge and reflect this power relation and endeavour to reduce the *symbolic violence* present in communication. A broad contextual knowledge of and familiarity with the research subject's circumstances, a *sympathetic and understanding perspective on the interviewee*, the interviewer's attempt to take the interviewee's standpoint and *active and methodical listening* are preconditions for the *democratization of the interview situation* and an understanding of the interviewee's perspective. The interview transcription and presentation is considered an act of interpretation in itself and should be complemented by contextual data and descriptions, remarks on the communication process and comments by the researcher. This should enable the reader to adopt the interviewee's perspective and social situatedness and also help the latter to clarify his or her standpoint and explore new possibilities for agency in the process.

### *Subject-scientific methodology and the problem-centred interview*

Bourdieu's methodological considerations largely coincide with methodological approaches developed in subject-scientific Critical Psychology.<sup>82</sup> Under the general leitmotif of conducting research of emancipatory relevance from the subject standpoint, Critical Psychology defines the research process as an interactive relationship between researcher and research subject. Here the research subject is considered a co-researcher, rather than the object of research. Research should analyze conditions for, the meanings of

**82** Bourdieu has been discussed controversially in Critical Psychology. His habitus theory and introduction of different forms of capital, including categories such as *symbolic* and *cultural* capital, was criticized in part as blurring the lines between the material and economic production processes that determine the subject's agency, on the one hand, and the level of subjective and symbolic meaning and interpretation, on the other.

and grounds for action that determine the subject's range of agency (German: Prämissen-Bedeutungs-Begründungs-Analyse). This clarifies the connection between the economic and social situation of the subject, on the one hand, and his or her individual life and range of agency, on the other, ultimately enabling the research subject to widen the range of action and generate new solutions to individual challenges (Markard, 2000).<sup>83</sup> Within this general framework of emancipatory, subject-centred research, I took recourse to Mayring (2000), Andreas Witzel (2000) and Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to operationalize the interview concept, and I conducted problem-centred interviews that were both narrative and unstructured. Witzel (2000) outlines three principles for problem-centred interviews. Firstly, research questions should be grounded on contextual knowledge and its relevance to the research subject and to society (German: Problemzentrierung). Secondly, methods and communication techniques, e.g., group discussions, individual or biographical interviews, questionnaires and unstructured communication, should be used flexibly, depending on the circumstances, and can be combined to better encircle the research topic (German: Gegenstandsorientierung). Thirdly, communication with the interviewee is understood as a process in which the interviewee reflects on and modifies his or her narration. Hence redundancies, repetition and contradictions should be seen as an opportunity to deepen the interviewee's self-reflection and the interviewer's understanding, rather than as a disturbance (Prozessorientierung).

Free-floating interviewee narratives can reveal subjective structures of meaning that would otherwise be blocked out by systematic or standardized questioning (Mayring, 2000).

**83** I have referred at several points to two pieces of research that explicitly address trauma from a subject-scientific point of view: Katarina Rafailović's (2005) work on the use of the trauma diagnosis in the work with refugees in Germany and Silvia Schriefers' (2008) research on trauma and coping in biographical narratives of refugees in Germany.

On the other hand, many people find it difficult to narrate freely. Problem-centred questions and comments by the interviewer can help them to stimulate their memory and to clarify specific episodes, and thus deepen their own understanding of their subjective perspective (Witzel, 2000). Guidelines with a number of key questions worked out prior to the interview can help to keep it focused.

*Interviewing survivors of violence -  
Dori Laub's notes on witnessing*

Interviewing people who have gone through experiences of massive violence and loss is a particularly sensitive and complex endeavour and a challenge for both interview partners. It poses ethical and methodological questions beyond the aforementioned overall methodological interview framework.

As already seen, traumatic experiences have a strong impact on memory. Traumatic memory is fragmented and disrupted; certain elements of the experience are inaccessible to narrative memory, but persist in the form of flashbacks, nightmares or sudden intrusions. The latter can be activated at any moment by a smell, a face or - potentially - an interview question. One component of processing traumatic experience is to transform fragmented into narrative memory and reintegrate the violent experience into the person's biography. Consequently, an interview situation with survivors of violence is always more than simply listening to a narrative. As psychoanalyst Dori Laub (1992) impressively describes from his vast experience of collecting testimonies of Holocaust survivors, interviewing survivors of violence means entering into a relationship with those who are struggling to reconstruct their memory and history. The listener/interviewer takes an active part in the process of reconstruction and becomes the »blank screen on which the event comes to be inscribed for the first time« (Laub, 1992, p. 57). The listener assumes the role of the witness and »so-

cial other« that is absent during the traumatic experience itself.

In other words, the interview/testimony setting leads to an interactive process between narrator and listener. The memories of atrocities and the related pain emerging in the interviews, albeit not yet surfaced or verbalized, may exceed the limits of what narrator and listener can bear. Interview narratives can trigger overwhelming memories in the survivor. It is therefore of the utmost importance for the interviewer to sense and respect the narrator's limits. At the same time, the interviewer is also confronted with disturbing images and shares to a certain extent the victim's confusion and horror. It is equally crucial that interviewers carefully consider their own limits, reactions and defence mechanisms. At what point does the interviewer tend to disbelieve or downplay the victim's narration because it seems unbearable? When, on the other hand, are interviewers so overwhelmed by compassion that they further drive the interviewee to a victim's logic?

The interviewees are victims of human aggression and distrust the social other. They are in perpetual inner conflict with the aggressor's logic and introjects and they react sensitively to situations in which they feel they are not taken seriously or when they feel their dignity is impaired. Such situations immediately remind them of the traumatic situation itself. Empathy with the survivors and respect for their first-person truths are essential ingredients for an open interview situation. The use of perpetrator vocabulary can be perceived by the victims as a prolongation of the aggression and should be avoided at all costs. It is nevertheless important not to over-identify with the interviewee. I have occasionally heard researchers and journalists say that they felt traumatized by the stories told by Anfal women. Quite apart from the fact that listening to testimonies is unlikely to cause trauma, the focus on the interviewers' personal feelings trivializes the survivors' abyss experience and is likely to offend and alienate them.

It would be misleading to scrutinize interviews with survivors of violence for historical facts or so-called truths. Memories of extreme violence have their own scale of time and space. Parts of the experience remain alive in a victim's memory as if they had happened the day before; others are fragmented, repressed and dissociated. Memory of the violence suffered is not structured chronologically, but in terms of subjective meanings. The interviewer should be well versed in the historical and social context of the survivor's narration, and he or she should attempt to read between the lines, endure and – in Dori Laub's words – »listen to and hear the silence« (Laub, 1992, p. 60).

Dori Laub (1992, pp. 59-60) tells the story of a sixty-year-old woman Auschwitz survivor who came to give testimony at the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies at Yale University. Because it impressed me greatly and shaped my approach to the »truth« in the testimonies of women Anfal survivors, I will quote the story at length:

She was slight, self-effacing, almost talking in whispers, mostly to herself. Her presence was indeed barely noteworthy in spite of the overwhelming magnitude of the catastrophe she was addressing. She tread lightly, hardly leaving a trace.

She was relating her memories as an eye-witness to the Auschwitz uprising. A sudden intensity, passion and color were infused into the narrative. She was fully there. »All of a sudden,« she said »we saw four chimneys going up in flames, exploding. The flames shot into the sky. People were running. It was unbelievable.« There was a silence in the room, a fixed silence against which the woman's words reverberated loudly, as though carrying along an echo of the jubilant sounds exploding from behind barbed wires [...]. It was no longer the deadly timelessness of Auschwitz. A dazzling, brilliant moment from the past swept through the frozen stillness of the muted grave-like landscape with dashing meteoric speed, exploding in a shower of sights and sounds. Yet the meteor from the past kept moving on. The woman felt silent and the tumults of the moment faded. She became subdued again, and her voice resumed the uneventful, monotonous and

lamenting tone. The gates of Auschwitz closed and the veil of obliteration and of silence, at once oppressive and repressive, descended once again [...].

Many months later a conference of historians, psychoanalysts and artists gathered to reflect on the relation of education to the Holocaust, watched the videotaped testimony of the woman, in an attempt to better understand the era. A lively debate ensued. The testimony was not accurate, historians claimed. The number of chimneys was misrepresented. Historically only one chimney was blown up, not all four. Since the memory of the testifying woman turned out to be, in this way, fallible, one could not accept - nor give credence - to her whole account of the events. It was utterly important to remain accurate, lest the revisionists in history discredit everything.

A psychoanalyst, who had been one of the interviewers of this woman, profoundly disagreed. ›The woman was testifying,‹ he insisted, ›not to the number of the chimneys blown up but to something else, more radical, more crucial: the reality of an unimaginable occurrence. One chimney blown up in Auschitz was as incredible as four. The number mattered less than the fact of the occurrence. The event itself was almost inconceivable. The woman testified to an event that broke the all-compelling frame of Auschwitz, where Jewish armed revolts just did not happen and had no place. She testified to the breakage of a framework. That was historical truth.‹

It is precisely the scrutinizing of the gaps between historical fact and memory that enables the listener to survivors of violence to grasp their »subjective truth« (Laub, 1992, p. 62) from inside the violent experience. It is this subjective truth that I look for in my research on women Anfal survivors.

### *Scenic understanding*

I explored my interviews with women Anfal survivors for content, but gave special weight to silence or non-verbal expressions of rage, agitation, pain or despair that hinted

at particularly painful memories, repressed memories or issues that were taboo and shameful. To interpret these expressions and situations, I took recourse to psychoanalytical concepts, namely, the concept of *scenic understanding* originally developed by Alfred Lorenzer (1970). It is based on the psychoanalytical assumption that people unconsciously repeat learned patterns of behaviour in their current lives and tend to re-enact unconscious and unprocessed experiences in their daily interactions and social relations. Lorenzer distinguishes various levels of understanding interaction: the *logical understanding* of the content in communication (what is being said?) and the *psychological understanding* of the relation (how are things said? What emotions and moods can be observed in the interaction?). Combining logical and psychological understanding leads to an understanding of the »scene« or a *scenic understanding* of action patterns and relations between actors. The ultimate uncovering of unconscious patterns behind interactional dynamics would lead to a *depth-hermeneutical understanding* of unconscious desires and defence mechanisms, and of repressed experiences and memories. Scenic understanding has become a tool in psychoanalytical settings and in the therapeutic method of *psychodrama*. The therapist leaves his or her observing position and actively engages in an interactional process with the client. Therapists consciously use mechanisms of *transference* and *countertransference* to understand the interactional pattern of the scene, but also to provide the client with alternative options for action and for developing the scene (Ottomeyer, 1992). I certainly don't mean to draw a comparison between a psychotherapeutic setting and my interview situations with women Anfal survivors. Yet elements of the scenic understanding method have been helpful in interviews and work situations loaded with intense emotion or tension, or when women Anfal survivors re-enacted scenes of loss and separation. It has also proved useful for the interpretation of body language, emotions and silences and for uncovering subjective meanings beyond the spoken word.

#### 4.4 Interviewing Anfal women - interview conditions

Although equipped with so many principles and methods for an emancipatory and democratic research process, and despite my numerous and longstanding contacts to women Anfal survivors, I still found it difficult to approach individual women for an interview. Many were upset about the countless interviews they had given to local and international NGO workers, government representatives and the local media, and the subsequent lack of assistance and recognition in exchange. I also imagined how frightening it must be for these women to step out of a group situation into an individual interview setting. In addition, it felt more legitimate to communicate with them in work situations that had a practical goal than to urge them into an intimate testimony setting outside a therapeutic framework and to confront them with their experience. For this reason, I interviewed women I already knew from a work context and would continue to be in contact with.

In 1999, I conducted a series of eight interviews with ten women for my diploma dissertation. At the time I was specifically interested in the socio-economic conditions of women in households without a male breadwinner. For the most part, I interviewed women whose husbands and other male relatives were missing and women from work contexts such as the bakery project in Kifri or the sewing workshop in Sulaimania. All interviews were audiotaped.

I also draw on interviews the HAUKARI testimony documentation team conducted between 2002 and 2004 (i.e. shortly before and after the fall of the Baath regime). The interviewees were women Anfal survivors and women who worked with Anfal survivors in health or educational contexts. These interviews were videotaped and focus on experiences during and after Anfal and on the women's needs and demands. Excerpts from the interviews were used for the HAUKARI documentary *Enfal* (Haukari e.V., 2006). I analyzed eight of these interviews.

More recent interviews with women Anfal survivors made between 2008 and 2012 concentrated on the changes in their lives after the fall of the Baath regime, their current circumstances and their expectations of a national and regional process of dealing with the past. I had the privilege of once again interviewing five of the women I had spoken to previously and was thus able to compare their narratives directly. I conducted interviews with another ten women engaged in the memorial project and two men who had been imprisoned in Nugra Salman. Most of the interviews were audiotaped; I made notes during two of the interviews and wrote memory minutes immediately afterwards, as the women concerned did not wish their voices to be recorded on tape. Two interviews with women from the memorial project were videotaped. I also carried out five short interviews with women and men from the second-generation of Anfal survivors, focusing on their relationships with their mothers.

Before embarking on the more recent interviews, I informed all interviewees of the scope of my research. The interviews were unstructured and problem-centred, as outlined above, and included minor questions to encourage interviewees to unfold their narratives and guide them through different time periods.

The purpose of some questions was to deepen my understanding and that of the interviewees of certain events and to reflect on them. Other questions served to encourage the women not to focus solely on the trauma of Anfal, but to think about their lives before and after the atrocities. Questions asked in the interviews between 2008 and 2012 acted as an incentive to consider what had helped them to cope and given them strength. The women were frequently surprised to be asked about their lives before Anfal or what survival strategies they had employed in its aftermath. Their reaction revealed the extent to which their socially constructed and cemented role as victims had been internalized. The interview situation itself provided the women with an avenue for reflection on this role and the opportunity to look beyond it.

At no time did I insist on a specific interview setting. On the contrary, I am highly sceptical of a methodology that urges survivors of violence into standardized one-to-one situations. Interviewees frequently expressed the wish to have relatives or friends around them when they talked about their suffering. This helped them to cope, for example with painful memories and possible flashbacks. In addition, Anfal women are accustomed to acting in group or family contexts; they find the one-to-one-interview situation artificial and uncomfortable. I left the decision on the setting to the women themselves and the specific context. Most interviews were conducted in Anfal survivors' homes. As a rule, the houses in Sumud have a living room with a cement or tiled floor where guests are received. Mattresses and cushions line the walls. Tea and water are served when guests arrive and relatives and neighbours show up to welcome the guests. In the course of several interviews, members of the family dropped by and sat down. The Anfal women's grown-up sons and daughters or grandchildren sometimes sat beside the women during the interview or appeared intermittently. Other Anfal women joined occasionally, allowing the situation to develop into a group interview. I, too, was sometimes accompanied by another Anfal woman or a colleague from the memorial project. I am fully aware that the presence of others – especially male members of the family – greatly affects what is narrated and how. For this reason, I sometimes returned to certain subjects of the interviews later on in a different situation. Nevertheless, the interaction with family members and neighbours was itself an additional source of insight into the lives of the Anfal women in question.

The interviews were embedded in longer visits to the women's houses and informal conversations before and after the actual interview, when we drank tea or ate together.

As my interviews were not conducted in a therapy setting, I did not feel entitled at any time to allude to intimate experiences of violence or deep sentiments of grief unless these were broached by the women themselves in the course of their interview narratives. Although none of the women had

flashbacks or decompensated in an interview situation, several vividly re-enacted parts of their experience and became agitated or despondent. I would then help them to »rest« or »recover« by asking questions about other, less painful episodes in their lives.

I avoided confronting the women with contradictions between historically documented fact and their narrations or with inconsistencies. The sole exception was a one-to-one exchange with Suhaila, during which we discussed her conscious appropriation of other Anfal women's stories in her interviews and statements (see Chapter 14).

I conducted the interviews in the Kurdish language (Sorani) and then simultaneously translated and transcribed them into English or German. The transcriptions are literal. They include notes on the interview situation, on communication or episodes surrounding the interview and on nonverbal communication between the interviewer and the interviewee, i.e. facial expressions, body movements and re-enactments.

For the analysis, interview material was correlated with other relevant material generated in work processes and participant observation and was evaluated within the qualitative content analysis framework; as outlined above, I took also recourse to psychoanalytical methods for the interpretation of emotions, silence and body language.

The interpretation of the individual interviews helped me to understand the different experiences of violence, life situations and coping strategies of the women I interviewed. By comparing the content and language of the interviews, I was able to identify a series of recurring motifs and linguistic metaphors that helped me to understand the relationship between individual and collective memories and narratives. Finally, comparing interviews from different time periods and correlating them with socio-political developments in Kurdistan and Iraq reveals the strong link between socio-political, economic and gender factors, on the one hand, and the memories, narratives, life situations and coping strategies of the women concerned, on the other.

## **5 Research location and central figures**

My research focuses on women Anfal survivors in the Germyan region and, more precisely women who stayed out in the former collective town of Sumud. In this chapter I will give some historical background on the Germyan region with particular focus on the 3rd Anfal stage 1988 and its impact. I will describe the specific location, introduce the life stories of some survivors and detail our relationship and the interview settings. Of the many survivors I have worked with and talked to in the course of twenty years, I focus on those whose experiences and narratives have fed most into my research.

### **5.1 The research location**

#### *The Germyan region before Anfal*

The name Germyan means warm land. Partly hilly, partly flat, Germyan lies in the southeast of the Kurdistan Region, bordering Iran to the east and the oil-rich region of Kirkuk and the Sunni Arab heartland of Iraq to the west. Before Anfal Germyan was primarily a rural region with some six hundred villages and a number of market centres, including Derbendikhan, Kalar and Kifri. Despite adverse conditions – dry sandy soil and scorching summers – the population lived on agriculture and animal husbandry. The region was under-served in terms of infrastructure, education, health and government services; the inhabitants were organized in extend-

ed family structures along tribal loyalties. Social relations were regulated by a patriarchal code of moral and ethics, influenced by both tribal law and Islamic belief, which restricted women's movements and self-determination.

The region's proximity to the Iranian border and the vast oil regions of Khanaqin and Kirkuk, not to mention its own unprocessed oil resources, made Germyan a region of strategic significance for the Baath regime. As early as the 1970s and 1980s, villages in the vicinity of the border were destroyed and their inhabitants forcibly relocated to collective towns.

In the mid-1970s, the Germyan region gradually became a stronghold of the Kurdish resistance movement. Led by Nawshirwan Mustafa Amin, the PUK's left wing KOMALA set up its headquarters in the area. At that time the majority of PUK resistance fighters were men from the Germyan region. Favouring socialism, the KOMALA faction pursued both an anti-Baath and an anti-tribal agenda. Apart from institutions and representatives of the Baath regime in Germyan, they targeted tribal leaders and expropriated landowners, distributing the land to poor farmers. They thus enjoyed strong support from the poor rural population. Under the command of KOMALA *peshmerga* forces, the male inhabitants of the villages were organized in armed defence units; village councils were set up and services for the villagers introduced, e.g., self-administered schools and health services (Mustafa, 1997).<sup>84</sup> For several years during the 1980s, many Germyan villages were inaccessible to the government.

Thus, long before the Anfal Campaign was launched, the situation in Germyan was rife with tension. Clashes between Iraqi government troops and *peshmerga* units were common in the area, as were village bombings. When Ali Hassan al-Majid assumed command of the northern governorates in

**84** During my humanitarian work in the 1990s, numerous villagers and former *peshmerga* told me about the self-administrative structures in the Germyan region.

March 1987, Germyan was declared a »prohibited area« and the collective towns of Sumud, Shores, Nasik and Barika were established. Iraqi troops began to systematically destroy the villages under their control and relocate the population to the camps. Bombardment of villages in the areas controlled by KOMALA grew more frequent. When the population was called upon to surrender, some families left »voluntarily« to resettle in the collective towns. The majority of the Germyan population, however, relied on the protection of the *peshmerga*, who prompted them to stay. The question whether the *peshmerga* could have done more to warn or protect the population is still the subject of spirited discussion in the region today (see Chapter 15 and 16).

### *The third Anfal stage in southern Germyan*

On 7 April 1988, Iraqi troops moved to southern Germyan for the third Anfal stage, which has been called the most savage of the entire Anfal Campaign (Human Rights Watch, 1993). While men were the prime target in other regions, in southern Germyan more than fifty per cent of those evicted or killed were women and children. Thousands of women, children and elderly were detained and tormented in prisons for months.

Human Rights Watch was able to reconstruct this stage of the Anfal Campaign in great detail, following evaluation of Baath regime documents that included a number of cables from *istikhbarat*, the Baathist Military Intelligence Service, bearing details of battle plans and operation procedures. The following description draws on the respective documentation by Human Rights Watch (1993) and anticipates some of the Anfal women's testimonies, to which I will refer in more detail in later chapters.

On the morning of 7 April, several columns of Iraqi military and *jash* battalions invaded the Germyan area from different directions. The basic strategy was to carry out mass arrests, destroy villages, funnel fugitive villagers to prearranged col-

lection points and ultimately to »wipe out all vestiges of human settlement« (Human Rights Watch 1993, p. 132).

The *peshmerga* units lacked fortified bases on the plains and were thus unable to withstand the overwhelming strength of the Iraqi troops, who were backed by *jash* units, tanks and helicopters. Most of the *peshmerga* died fighting or, once captured, were killed instantly. The Iraqi troops advanced with great speed from village to village. In some areas, the villagers were taken by surprise. Men and women were lined up separately and transported by lorry to organized collection points. People from other villages had fled to the hills, but were eventually captured and likewise transported to collection points. Yet others succeeded in fleeing the encirclement by means of breaches temporarily opened by the *peshmerga* forces. Stories circulate about some *jash* and *mustashar* who helped villagers to hide or escape. Most *jash* units, however, played an active role in looting and destroying villages and handed fugitives over to Iraqi soldiers. Some villagers came to the collection points of their own accord after the *jash* had spread rumours that amnesty would be granted to those who surrendered.

As a rule, villagers were channelled through various collection points, e.g. from Mela Sura to Maidan and then to Qadir Qaram. The situation was chaotic, with soldiers and *jash* omnipresent but incapable of coping with the vast number of captives; in some places people »camped« outside, while in others women were held in public buildings or schools and men behind barbed wire. After the standard identity checks and initial interrogation, they were transported to prison-like holding centres, e.g., an empty youth centre in the city of Tuz Khurmatu in southern Kirkuk or a military fort in Qoratu, close to the city of Dyala. From there the odyssey continued to the notorious Topzawa camp, an army base with an area of two square miles south of Kirkuk, where prisoners were separated according to age and sex. Women and small children constituted one group, the elderly and infirm men another, while men and boys between fifteen and fifty (based purely on appearance) were finally herded together. The lat-

ter were stripped of personal belongings and detained in overcrowded halls, with little food and no sanitation. They were systematically interrogated, frequently strung up by their feet and beaten, kept in isolation for days without food and humiliated in a multitude of other ways. Women, children and the elderly received almost no food and were subjected to arbitrary punishment and torment. Witness accounts reveal how soldiers and guards snatched babies and small children from their mothers and kept them in separate rooms, so that the mothers could hear them screaming and crying. Several children died of illness and starvation in Topzawa, where according to witness testimony their bodies were flung into pits outside (Human Rights Watch, 1993, p. 215). Thousands of Kurdish villagers captured during the various stages of the Anfal Campaign passed through the Topzawa military base.

Women and the elderly watched as men were lined up in the courtyard, handcuffed, some of them blindfolded, stripped to their underwear and loaded onto covered vehicles.<sup>85</sup> The men were never seen again.

While elderly men were transported by truck from Topzawa to the notorious Nugra Salman jail in southern Iraq, women and children were brought to the next station in their ordeal, the women's prison in Dibs, an army base used to train Iraqi commando forces (Human Rights Watch, 1993, p. 222). Many of them were detained here for four or five months.<sup>86</sup> Prisoners received food regularly and sanitation was available. Yet women and children were beaten and children forced to work. A great many children and elderly women died in Dibs. Their bodies were left for days with the other prisoners and eventually buried somewhere in the city of Dibs, where child prisoners were coerced into helping with the burial. Some child survivors remember burying at least fifty children (Human Rights Watch, 1993, p. 224).

**85** See Faima's narration in Chapter 6.

**86** See Amira's narration in Chapter 6.

Busses with sealed windows left Dibs regularly. Several thousand women and children vanished from Dibs to an unknown destination. An estimated five hundred women, primarily from southern Germyan, ended up in Nugra Salman, the jail that was to become a symbol of the Anfal ordeal. The journey from Dibs to Nugra Salman took twelve to fifteen hours, each bus packed with fifty or sixty women on a windowless trek.

Nugra Salman jail was an old fort erected in 1930 close to the Saudi Arabian border. Abandoned for years, Arab nomads had used it as a shelter for cattle. Numerous cells were grouped around a large courtyard, the walls of which were covered in prisoners' writing. Someone had written »welcome to hell« over the main gate (Human Rights Watch 1993, p. 228). Men and women were kept there during Anfal under harrowing conditions of overcrowding, lack of food and humiliation. Men and women were subjected to torture, hung up by their feet on steel poles or bound to the window crosses. They were forced to stay in the courtyard for hours in the scorching sun with their heads bowed. A »steady stream of deaths« occurred in Nugra Salman (Human Rights Watch 1993, p. 231), most of the victims were children or the elderly people no longer able to hold out against hunger and exhaustion. Survivors speak of 500 to 700 deaths in Nugra Salman between May and September 1988 (*ibid.*, p. 232 and my interview with Mam Rashid, 2011). The bodies were left to decompose where they had died before groups of prisoners were ordered to bury them in trenches a few hundred metres away. Wild desert dogs ferreted the bodies out at night and ripped them to pieces (*ibid.*, p. 235).<sup>87</sup>

The ordeal of the prisoners in Nugra Salman, Dibs and Topzawa did not cease until 8 September 1988, when guards brought the prisoners news of an amnesty. They were released in weekly intervals until finally, in November, the last group of five hundred Germyan women left Nugra Salman.

**87** See Anfal women's narrations Chapter 6.

On their release, the prisoners were lined up and registered again, packed onto trucks and channelled through diverse police stations before being dispersed to Sulaimania city or the surroundings of Arbat, a small town on the road from Sulaimania to Derbendikhan. Some were taken to Chamchamal and resettled in the Shoresh resettlement complex, others to Kalar and the Sumud complex.

### *The Germyan region after Anfal*

Anfal devastated the Germyan region. About six hundred villages were razed to the ground. Houses and agricultural fields were bulldozed or burnt, livestock killed and deep wells sealed with cement, rendering the region uninhabitable. The few surviving *peshmerga* groups retreated to Iran. During the Anfal Campaign tens of thousands of men and women disappeared from Germyan alone. Their bodies are presumed to be found in unopened mass graves throughout Iraq. To this day, only a small number of those disappeared from the Germyan region have been identified, exhumed and reburied. Ten thousands of Anfal survivors, exhausted and shaken by their multiple losses and their own experience of violence, were scattered in the collective towns of Sumud and Shoresh, which were controlled by and dependent on the perpetrators, i.e. Iraqi soldiers and Kurdish *mustashars*. Forbidden to return to their villages, the survivors were cut off from income opportunities and restricted in their movements. The entire socio-economic structure of the region was destroyed. Not a single family in Germyan remained unaffected by losses sustained before, during or after Anfal.

In the course of the Second Gulf War in 1991, the people of Germyan joined the Kurdish uprising against the Baath regime and were forced to flee to Iran when it was crushed by Iraqi troops. After 1991, the Baath regime continued to control the Germyan district of Qadir Qaram and the villages close to Tuz Khurmatu and Kirkuk. Large areas of rural Ger-

myan, including the collective towns of Shores and Sumud, however, were within the confines of the Kurdish provisional autonomous region.

Under Kurdish administration, the Germyan region remained underserved and neglected throughout the 1990s. KOMALA, whose stronghold had been among the Germyan people, was dissolved at the PUK congress in 1992. The dominant parties henceforth concentrated on consolidating their respective power bases in Sulaimania (PUK) and Erbil/Barzan (KDP). Involved in an internecine party war over power and resources from the mid-1990s, they made little or no investment in the Germyan region. International and UN organizations were reluctant to work there, since the region lay outside the UN no-fly zone in the immediate vicinity of the provisional and unsecured Iraqi-Kurdish frontline.

The few international aid projects in progress focused on rural reconstruction and rehabilitation. Although in the 1990s quite a number of Germyan villages were reconstructed and families had resumed agricultural production, lack of services in the villages drove many of those who resettled to return to the collective towns after a short period. Here, at the same time, the situation deteriorated. Under the expectation of disbanding the camps neither the Kurdistan Regional Government nor international organizations invested in infrastructure or services in the following years (see Chapter 4).

Thus throughout the 1990s, large sections of the Germyan population continued to live in extreme poverty, cut off from education, health and other government services. Disappointed by the lack of support for their communities despite having paid the highest blood tribute in the Kurdish liberation struggle, the Germyan people gradually lost confidence in the leading Kurdish parties and the regional political process and fell back on tribal and religious loyalties. Indeed, the 1990s saw a revival of tribal and religious concepts and of the traditional code of ethics. The beneficiaries of this lack of interest in the region were Islamic groups, who garnered support among the population with welfare programmes.

Once the stronghold of the revolutionary wing of the Kurdish liberation movement, Germyan now paradoxically disintegrated into a remote area of Iraqi Kurdistan with tribal loyalties and a traditional, patriarchal code of ethics that regulated everyday life and explicitly restricted the movements of women.

### *The Germyan region after 2003*

The situation changed in 2003. With the fall of the Baath regime, the lifting of international sanctions and vast oil reserves still unexploited, the region became a strategic goldmine for the Kurdistan Regional Government. As early as November 2004, the regional government signed an agreement with the Canadian-based Western Zagros Oil Company,<sup>88</sup> and Canadian, French and British companies are now in the process of setting up refineries to exploit oil in the Germyan region. Paralleling this, the Kurdish government began to invest in the region's infrastructure. The construction of roads and water and sewage systems finally got under way. Health and education facilities were established in the former collective towns, which have meanwhile advanced to urban centres. Pensions were increased and land and housing distributed to the survivors of war and of Anfal.

Decades of conflict and massive violence, however, and the prolonged absence of government services and assistance after 1991 left their mark on Germyan society. Mistrust towards the major Kurdish parties and alienation from the regional process are widespread, and loyalties are with tribal and familiar lineages rather than government structures. Legal and social reforms passed by the Kurdistan Regional Government in recent years have rarely trickled down to the Germyan area, and women, particularly from the villages, still have only limited access to education and legal

**88** See [www.westernzagros.com](http://www.westernzagros.com) (last accessed 1 Nov. 2011).

rights. Germyan has the highest rate of female genital mutilation in Iraqi Kurdistan (WADI, 2010; Human Rights Watch, 2010); numerous women are subjected to forced marriages and traditional marriage contracts, and their range of movement and access to public space is curtailed by a strict code of honour and shame. Violation of this code leads to severe sanctions (see Chapter 9). On the other hand, the people of Germyan look back on a long tradition of political partisanship and of resistance and struggle. They survived extreme violence and hardship in the aftermath of Anfal and are highly politicized. By 2009, Germyan had become a major stronghold of the emerging Goran opposition movement; the broad support for Goran shows the extent of disappointment in the region's marginalization.

Today the Germyan region is a bewildering blend of social conservatism and persistent tribal, traditional and patriarchal values in the public and private sphere, on the one hand, and a highly politicized population that challenges the Kurdish political elite and is struggling for social justice and acknowledgement, on the other.

The Kurdish political leadership's and the urban elite's perception of Germyan reflects this ambivalence. While the Germyan region is marginalized and discredited as backward and remote, its people are considered courageous and bellicose, and unrest in the region is seen as a serious threat to the reigning political class. In the spring of 2011, demonstrations in several Germyan cities against corruption and for improvement of supplies and services were accompanied by clashes between demonstrators and security forces. Kurdish politicians subsequently hastened to visit the region, distribute money and land to their clientele and announce welfare programmes and economic incentives in an effort to quell the unrest.<sup>89</sup>

**89** The Kurdistan Region's President, Massud Barzani, combined talks with the Goran opposition movement leader, Nawshirwan Mustafa Amin,

*The collective town of Sumud – today: the town of Rizgary*

In 1987, prior to Anfal, the Baath regime erected the *mu-jamma'a* of Sumud for the purpose of relocating villagers evacuated from the prohibited zone of Southern Germyan and keeping them under control. The families of villages evacuated and destroyed prior to Anfal and those families who »surrendered« and left their villages at the beginning of Anfal were given housing, food and services by the Baath regime in compensation for their properties in the villages. After Anfal, tens of thousands of survivors released from detention or leaving their hideouts after the amnesty were forced to settle in Sumud. They did not receive housing and were largely left to fend for themselves. At the end of the Anfal operations, some 70,000 people had been forcibly settled in Sumud; along with the camp of Shoresh near Chamchamal, erected for the relocation of the Northern Germyan population, Sumud was among the largest resettlement camps in Kurdistan-Iraq.

Although I had seen the destructive impact of Anfal and the sorry atmosphere of collective towns in other regions, I was particularly stunned when I first came to Sumud in 1993. Situated in the middle of nowhere, on sandy plains near the main road that links Kalar and Kifri, Sumud was an endless wilderness of sand-coloured houses blending with the environment, exposed to the dust, sandstorms and burning heat of the Germyan summer and metamorphosing into a swamp of yellowish-brown mud in the winter. Similar to other collective towns Sumud was structured like a military camp with straight paved roads cutting the settlement into quadrants that were easy to control.<sup>90</sup> The entrances to the camp, which resembled town gates, were decorated

with a visit to the Germyan region in September 2011 (26 Sept. 2011, Rudaw, <http://www.rudaw.net/english/kurds/4004.html>).

**90** On the spatial planning of the collective towns, see Recchia & Wachtmeister's conversation with Azad Shekhani (2009).

with oversized symbols of the Baath regime or pictures of Saddam Hussein. The pictures were still in place in 1993, though riddled with bullets and half-destroyed. The streets were lined with solid townhouses equipped with electricity and running water. Schools and hospitals were built at focal points. Random provisional dwellings had begun to appear after Anfal and were now dotted around the settlement.

The structure of the collective towns mirrored the Iraqi regime's ambiguous policy towards the Kurds. After being subjected to extreme violence and destruction, Anfal survivors were held like prisoners in Sumud under military control; they were forbidden to leave the camp, to return to their home villages or to take up productive activities. At the same time, provision with housing, food rations, and health and educational services concealed the camp character and allowed Baath propaganda to disguise the forced deportation of Anfal survivors as a campaign to modernize the backward Kurdish rural inhabitants.

After 1991 families who returned to their home villages within the framework of internationally funded reconstruction programmes demolished their houses in Sumud and took bricks, doors, windows and steel bars with them, as well as »their« share of the water pipes and electric wiring. Those who remained in the camp lived in a wasteland of rubble, where an occasional house was still standing and water and electricity systems were dysfunctional. Throughout the 1990s up until 2003, no investments were made in the infrastructure of Sumud, nor did the inhabitants of the camp benefit in any way from humanitarian programmes. The situation slightly changed with UN Resolution No. 986 in 1998 and the following countrywide food distribution. However, health centres and schools in the camp were poorly equipped and lacked staff. Water supplies were out of order, so that women were obliged to carry buckets of water from a central water point to their houses, at times a journey of several kilometres. There were no trees, no parks and no areas for children to play or for young people to meet. The desolation was complete when the rainy season saw the streets of

Sumud transformed into a muddy quagmire, a place »good for horses but not for humans« in the words of Suhaila, one of the women I interviewed.<sup>91</sup> Furthermore, Iraqi troops and tanks lay in wait on the hills beyond the main road a mile away, underlining the provisional status of the Kurdish region and the ubiquitous threat of a new catastrophe.

Between twenty and thirty thousand people remained in Sumud throughout the 1990s. These included families whose destroyed home villages were still under Iraqi control; women who had lost their husbands and were now bereft of male protection and provisions and who lacked access to land and male labour in the villages; and men and women who had lost their entire families. When I first arrived in Sumud in 1993, the scene was dominated by women dressed and veiled in black, sitting in front of their houses, queuing at health centres, carrying water buckets, firewood and sacks of rice. The sense of suffering and mourning was palpable everywhere.

Over time, the picture changed. The child survivors of Anfal grew up, new families came to settle in Sumud and take up economic activities. At the end of the 1990s, the Kurdistan Regional Government ultimately realized that the Sumud and Shoresh camps could not be completely dismantled.<sup>92</sup> Renamed »Rizgary« (Kurdish: liberation), Sumud became a sub-district with its own mayor and municipality. It was, however, not until 2003 that the Kurdish government began to invest in infrastructure and services in Sumud/Rizgary, to repair the water and sewage systems, to build roads, health centres, schools and libraries, to design public parks and to set up public traffic systems to connect Sumud/Rizgary with the nearby town of Kalar. Starting in 2007, Anfal survivors received budgets for housing and now started to build solid houses all over Sumud, many painting them in bright

**91** Interview with Suhaila, 1999.

**92** Other collective towns, such as Nasir and Barika on the road between Sulaimania and Derbendikhan, have been completely demolished.

colours. Infrastructural projects and the fledgling exploitation of oil in the Germyan region created new job opportunities and led to an influx of families from other regions to Kalar and Sumud. Now that Sumud is progressing to a full-blown town, it has begun to amalgamate with Kalar. It nonetheless remains a bleak and tentative place, unable to conceal its violent past and its character as a detention camp, where memories and narratives of violence are carved into people's daily lives (see also chapter 14.6.).

## 5.2 Key research figures

In the following I introduce the central figures of my research: the women - and some men - with whom I spent particularly much time, whom I interviewed several times in the course of the last twenty years and whose narratives and activities fed most into my research. I will give some biographical data on each of them and describe their experiences during Anfal and their family situation and life conditions both in the 1990s and later after 2003. Thus these short biographies anticipate a number of aspects of the survivors' life situations and their transformation during the last twenty years that will later be partly repeated but unfolded in greater detail in terms of categories and along a time axes.

### *Suhaila*<sup>93</sup>

Suhaila was one of the first women Anfal survivors I became close to in 1993. I have had the privilege of knowing her and working with her for the last twenty years, and I have witnessed the changes in her life at close quarters. Photographs reveal how beautiful she was in her youth. Despite

**93** Name and biographical details have been changed.

the immense suffering and hardship she has gone through, she remains an impressive woman of majestic appearance, tall and upright, with arresting eyes and graceful movements. Her daughter once said of her: »I love my mother's way of walking, of talking, and of dealing with people - she is so sensitive and so proud« (Gulistan, 2010).

Suhaila was born in 1953 in a village near Sarqala in Germyan. One of her three brothers joined the PUK *peshmerga* forces at the beginning of the 1980s, and Suhaila says she herself had been politically active since her childhood. In 1982 - at the age of twenty-nine - Suhaila and her father were arrested by the Baath regime and detained for three years in various prisons, among them the notorious Nugra Salman jail, which would later become the scene of thousands of deaths in the course of the Anfal Campaign. Suhaila was subjected to severe torture and is proud of not having succumbed to it and given information on the whereabouts of her brother in the *peshmerga* forces. Shortly after her release from prison in 1985, however, her brother was captured and killed by Iraqi security forces. His body was tied to a horse and dragged through several Germyan villages to deter potential supporters of the resistance.

Suhaila was married to her cousin Ahmed in 1986 and gave birth to their daughter in the following year. She and her family were in her native village when the Anfal Campaign began in 1988. Her husband was immediately deported with other men of the village; Suhaila and other women were given opportunity to go to the nearest towns and surrender. Suhaila left the village with her two remaining brothers and her then ten-month-old daughter and hid in the house of relatives in Kifri. She never saw her husband again.

Having wandered from one hideout to the next with her daughter, she finally came to Sumud following the amnesty in September 1988 and was allotted a house on the outskirts of the camp. When the Kurdish insurrection was crushed in 1991, she fled to Iran. On her return to Sumud and throughout the 1990s, she lived in a dark, sparsely furnished room in a former police building next door to one of her brothers

and his family. Suhaila fled again to Iran in 1996; I met her there in the Kermanshah refugee camp, where she was severely distressed by the interminable anguish to which she and her family were subjected.

Suhaila earned her living as a seamstress, making men's suits and women's dresses. She was later involved in several international NGO aid projects for Anfal women. In her capacity as the PUK women's union representative in Sumud, she frequently disagreed with the party line and gave voice to the women Anfal survivors' bitter protest against the blatant lack of government attention and relief. She became a vital contact person in the rural reconstruction programmes in Germyan, where we organized countless meetings, workshops and hearings with Anfal women to discuss their overall situation.

Suhaila was a witness at the Iraqi High Tribunal against Saddam Hussein in 2006. She is a founder and driving force of the Anfal Women Memorial Forum Project in Sumud/Rizgary and travelled to Germany at the invitation of HAUKARI in 2008, 2009 and 2012 to give testimony on Anfal and visit several Holocaust memorial sites. Although she never attended school, Suhaila reads and writes well. As a result of her political activities she has become more or less immune to »what people might say or think«. »My torturers made no difference between men and women. Ever since, I've stopped making a difference, too« (Suhaila, 2011).

Today Suhaila lives in a new, albeit modest three-room house with a tiny, highly cherished garden. Her daughter has a university degree, works as a teacher and lives with her husband and her two daughters with Suhaila, a rare and courageous constellation in patrilineal Germyan society. After many years of poverty and provisional circumstances, Suhaila today enjoys her new family life and her modest luxury and carries out her daily chores with a sense of contemplative satisfaction. In 2009, she made the journey to Mecca; on her return she began to wear a white instead of a black scarf, but she still wears dark clothes.

Suhaila says she now feels quiet and encourages other Anfal women to move on with their lives rather than look back and to appreciate the positive changes that have occurred. She is somewhat bitter about the new opposition group, Goran, which she sees as dividing the survivors of Anfal.

During the 1990s, I had countless informal conversations with Suhaila and other Anfal women in her neighbourhood, and I conducted a systematic interview with her in 1999. Our relationship intensified in the last years as a result of our shared experience in the memorial project. I interviewed her a second time in a more structured way in 2011. Whereas in the 1990s I had the impression I was stirring up her feelings with questions about Anfal, I now see her as more relaxed when she talks about her memories. On the other hand, when she talks about her missing husband her body language alters immediately and she physically re-enacts their separation as if it had happened yesterday.

Suhaila knows every single Anfal woman in Sumud and paved the way for my contact with them. Her wealth of experience and lucid analysis of Anfal women's lives have been crucial to my research in many instances.

### *Habsa*<sup>94</sup>

Suhaila and Habsa have been friends since their youth and shared many experiences. Habsa is a small, slim woman with sparkling eyes and sharp features marked by suffering. Warm and light-hearted towards others, she moves and speaks quickly, emanating a resoluteness that at times gives way to restlessness.

Habsa was born in 1954 to a large family in the village of Aziz Qadir: her father had three wives and twelve children. She describes her life as shaped by struggle and escape since early childhood. She was eight years old when her fam-

**94** Name and biographical details have been changed.

ily was first displaced following a bloody feud between two Kurdish tribes, which she now refers to as the »the Jaff tribe Anfal«<sup>95</sup> (Habsa, 2011). At fifteen, Habsa was married to a relative from her home village. At the beginning of the Anfal operations in 1988, she already had six children and was pregnant with her seventh. When the Iraqi troops closed in on the village, she was separated from her husband and eldest son but was able to escape with her remaining children, her grandmother, and her two sisters, one of whom had four and the other two children.

They were picked up by a *jash* who knew Habsa's father and brought them to a deserted building where they stayed for weeks on end. Habsa gave birth to her baby there. She managed to contact her father in Kalar, who came to the hideout at night and, one by one, took her children out of the encirclement to the safety of Baghdad, where they were hidden by relatives. Habsa, her youngest daughter, her newborn son, and both her sisters reached her father's house several weeks later. They remained hidden in the cellar for four months, until the amnesty was announced.

From then on, Habsa lived with her six children in a provisional dwelling in Sumud and worked as a day labourer in the tomato and eggplant fields. In 1991, however, she fled with the children to Iran. On her return to Sumud, she found shelter in a former government building. She shared two rooms with about fifteen other people, worked as a day labourer in the agricultural fields and became an active PUK cadre. In 1996, she again fled with her children to Iran, this time from the KDP forces that were advancing towards Germyan. To this day she has no information about the fate of her husband or her eldest son.

After 2003, Habsa received money from the Kurdistan Regional Government to build a house, but gave it to her sons.

**95** Interview with Habsa in April 2011. See also Chapter 15. The retrospective use of the term »Anfal« to describe other catastrophes will be discussed at several points in this study.

She herself still lives in one of the old traditional houses in Sumud with a courtyard that has a small garden. Habsa's six children are now grown up. Her sons are teachers or run shops at the market, one of her daughters has married and the youngest studies at university. Habsa's house is almost always full of people, all of whom sit on carpets along the walls of the long living room: her sons with their wives and children, her daughter with her husband and his relatives, her children's friends, her neighbours. The undisputed head of the household, Habsa sits in the middle allocating tasks to her children and grandchildren. She talks and moves quickly; she is a bundle of energy and constantly in action. Although illiterate, she is well versed in politics and a talented speaker in large groups.

Habsa was an active PUK member for years but has recently rather sympathized with Goran, the new political opposition movement. Her disappointment with the Kurdish government's lack of assistance to Anfal women was her prime motivation. Although this led to numerous arguments with Suhaila, the two women have remained friends and continue to work together in support of Anfal women and to visit each other.

Habsa has a great sense of humour and loves laughing. On the other hand, any reference on television to Anfal or to the opening of new mass graves can throw her into deep depression for days.

I met Habsa in 1995, when she became a regular attendant at Anfal women's meetings and project initiatives. I did not interview her at that time. Our contact intensified with the Anfal Women Memorial Forum Project forum, in which she is actively engaged. Since then we have spent much time together apart from work and I also had many occasions to talk to her more privately. I also had the privilege to see her in a different environment when she came to Germany with Suhaila in 2009. I carried out narrative interviews with Habsa in 2009, 2010 and 2011. The latter was a three-hour interview with Habsa and her youngest daughter and covered their entire experience during and after 1988. Habsa is very frank about her experience and her criticism of the

Kurdistan Regional Government and makes no secret of her life or her opinions. After the last interview, which retraced her childhood, she expressed particular satisfaction at having looked back on her life, claiming she could have continued in the same vein for hours. Habsa uses to emphasize her pride and that of other Anfal women at having brought up their children without support, and she is incensed about the lack of recognition and assistance from the Kurdish government.

### *Amira*<sup>96</sup>

Amira was born in 1962 in the village of Zinana, where her family lived from agriculture, and grew up with her three brothers and two sisters. In 1979, at the age of seventeen, she was married to Serbest in a traditional *jin-be-jin* marriage. Serbest and Amira's brother had agreed to marry each other's sisters, a traditional marriage contract that enables both families to relinquish the bride price. Henceforth, the two marriages are linked in a binding agreement, whereby the breakup of one marriage leads to the dissolution of the other.<sup>97</sup>

Amira gave birth to a daughter in 1980 and to three sons consecutively in 1982, 1986 and 1988. Her husband Serbest actively supported the PUK *pehmerga* forces, but continued to live with his family in Zinana. When the Anfal Campaign was launched, the family managed to escape shortly before the troops surrounded the village. They were captured soon afterwards, however, and brought to a detention camp in Maidan, where Serbest was separated from his family and has not been seen since. Amira and her children went through various detention centres and ended up in Dibs

**96** Names and biographical details have been changed.

**97** Chapter 9 describes traditional marriage agreements and their impact on women Anfal survivors' situation in greater detail

prison, where they were detained for three months and then released. As Amira says, they were treated »well« compared to prisoners in Nugra Salman jail, i.e. they were not beaten. Since many young children and babies died in Dibs, Amira lived in a state of constant fear for her then new-born son.

After their release, Amira and her children were hidden by her husband's family - his parents, three brothers and four sisters, all of whom had survived Anfal, though his mother died shortly after Anfal. Amira's own parents and her brother, who was married to Serbest's sister, also survived. Her two sisters and two other brothers went missing. In the exodus of 1991, she fled with her in-laws to the Iranian mountains. On their return in the summer of the same year, they moved to the collective town of Sumud.

I first met Amira, her children and her in-laws in 1993. At the time, they were living in extreme poverty and shared four rooms with thirteen other people. It was not until 1996 that Amira came into the possession of two rooms for herself and her children, affording her some long-desired privacy. Furnishings extended to mattresses, a cupboard and a small black and white television set. The family lived on monthly food rations distributed by the United Nations and a small pension from Amira's father-in-law, who had worked as a governmental employee for the Iraqi government. Amira had no income of her own. From the mid-1990s, she received sporadic financial and in-kind contributions from local and international charity organizations for her children's schooling.

When I met her, Amira was a physically strong, healthy woman. Highly energetic, she washed clothes, cleaned her house and cooked for the entire household. I never saw her take a rest. When she joined other women in front of their houses for a chat in the evening, she would bring a pot of rice with her to sort out the bad grains. She wore a dark house dress and a black head scarf. Her hands and her feet were hard-skinned and chapped, and her face was somewhat haggard. Although in her early thirties, at the time she looked ten or fifteen years older.

She had a habit of constantly complaining about daily trials and tribulations. Returning to her father's house was not an option, since this would have violated the traditional *jin-be-jin* contract and led to the dissolution of her brother's marriage with her husband's sister, who had eight children. She persevered, took care of her children and fought for their acceptance within the family, but I cannot remember seeing her showing affection towards her children. Her prime emotions at the time were bitterness and frustration.

Throughout the 1990s, she was convinced that her husband Serbest was alive and would one day return. Her children shared this conviction. In 1999, I asked her then sixteen-year-old daughter Cinar if she thought her father would come back. She turned to me in utter surprise and said: »Of course I do. If he doesn't, what are we going to do?«<sup>98</sup>

Serbest did not come back and Amira still has no news of his fate. Her daughter married a government employee and lives in a town close to Sumud. Her eldest son completed his university studies and now works as an engineer. Amira received a house from the Kurdistan Regional Government in 2009, where she lives with her two youngest sons, both of whom are unemployed and married with children. Amira looks after the house and takes care of her grandchildren. She is still extremely agile, but more relaxed than in the past and obviously proud of her new house and of her grandchildren.

I have met Amira at regular intervals since 1993. I conducted one semi-structured interview with her in 1999, focusing on her circumstances in the aftermath of Anfal, and a second interview in 2010, which was linked to the first but concentrated on her memories of Anfal and the changes in her life. Both interviews took place in Amira's family setting. Two of her children were present during the first interview and intervened at times. During the second interview, her

98 Conversation with Amira's daughter Cinar in 1999.

grown-up sons occasionally dropped in, listened for a while and then left again.

*Payman*<sup>99</sup>

Payman was born in 1965 in the village of Duragi. She was married at the age of fourteen and was a twenty-two-year-old mother of six children when her village was targeted by a bomb attack already one year before Anfal. She was severely injured and subjected to an odyssey through various hospitals and detention centres in the following year. She initially spent several months in hospital in Kirkuk along with her father, who was also injured, and the daughter of a cousin. She was subsequently detained at the police station in Tikrit and ultimately deported to Samarra jail. She was pregnant at the time but lost her baby in detention. Her narrations of this period are highly fragmented and unstructured and reveal the shock and disorientation that have accompanied her to this day.<sup>100</sup>

She came to Sumud in the wake of the amnesty and found only one of her daughters there. Her five other children had been deported to Nugra Salman jail and died there. Her husband, her sister and one of her brothers were missing. Shortly after Anfal, her father died.

Payman's face and body bear the physical scars of her multiple injuries. She lived with her brother and her daughter after Anfal in a provisional dwelling in Sumud. Due to her injuries, she was unable to work and depended completely on her brother for support. In her first interview in the testimony project in 2002, she was full of anger. She rushed through the months of her ordeal, the memory of which is both fragmented and disorganized, and then exploded with complaints about the lack of government assistance - »noth-

**99** Names and biographical details have been changed.

**100** See Chapter 6.

ing has been done for us« – and fantasies of revenge – »they should give Saddam to us, we'll cut him into pieces with our own hands« (Payman, 2002). Her foremost emotions were rage and disappointment.

I rarely saw Payman after that interview. She was not involved in the memorial project. When I visited her in 2011 for another interview, she refused vehemently and became quite angry. Although she had given countless interviews, she declared, nothing had been done for her. She later added that some of her husband's relatives and »people on the street« had criticized her for »pushing herself forward on television« (Payman, 2010). Once we sat down and had tea, she began to talk and allowed me to take notes. Her daughter and two other relatives were in the room, as was Suhaila, who had accompanied me to Payman's house. Today, Payman lives with her daughter and her brother's family in a solid three-room house subsidized by the government. As her daughter did not finish school after Anfal, she is today unemployed. Payman is still consumed with anger, speaks rapidly and repetitively about her five children who »were eaten by black dogs in Nugra Salman« (Payman, 2010). It is difficult to interrupt her flow of reproach and ask her specific questions. Asked how she survived the immense pain she suffered as a result of her children's deaths, she replied, »If it was just me, I would have died long ago. But we were many; we all had the same fate. So we just carried on« (Payman, 2010). On the day of the interviews she harshly rejected our invitation to join the memorial project; the very next day she turned up at a meeting and has been actively involved in the project ever since.

*Faima*<sup>101</sup>

Faima was born in 1958 in the village of Aw Barik. She was married to one of her cousins and describes a positive relationship with him. When Anfal began, the couple already had four sons and a daughter, and Faima was pregnant with their sixth child. They were captured together and brought to the Topzawa collection camp, where Faima gave birth to her youngest son on the day of their arrival. This was the last time she saw her husband. She and her children went through various transitional camps before ending up in Nugra Salman jail, where they were detained for seven months with little food or water. Faima was maltreated by the soldiers and witnessed the death of elderly and children, among them three of her nephews. Her children and her parents survived Nugra Salman, but her father died shortly after their release of grief, as she says. Her mother followed him a few weeks later. Faima's husband and her three brothers have never been found. Her husband's brothers were still children after Anfal; so Faima was obliged to look after her children without any family support. Along with other Anfal women, she worked in the eggplant and tomato fields. In 1991 she fled to Iran. »... I had six small children, one more tired than the other (...) it was terrible« (Faima, 2011).<sup>102</sup> In 1996, instead of fleeing yet again, she managed to hide in a village with distant relatives. Faima had attempted to return to her home village with her sons in 1991, but was unable to make a living there. When her eldest son died in 1998 in a tragic accident, she returned to Sumud.

A first interview with Faima was conducted within the HAUKARI testimony project in 2002 in the yard of the shabby provisional dwelling she lived in with her children. Her daughter was present at the interview, during which Faima

**101** The name and biographical details have been changed.

**102** See also Chapter 7.

concentrated on her experience of Anfal. Since 2009, I have regularly met Faima and interviewed her again in 2011 in her new home where she now lives with two of her sons, their wives and three grandchildren. Funded by the Kurdistan Regional Government, the house is big and includes a guest room with a floor covered in elaborately patterned tiles. There is also a well-kept garden.

Faima wears black and covers her hair with a black scarf. Her two beautiful daughters-in-law, in contrast, wear bright colours. At the time of the interview her children were playing around, and the atmosphere in the house seemed serene. The two sons joined us for a while during the interview. The son who was born in Topzawa on the night the Anfal Campaign began has no memory of Anfal. The other son, who was eight years old at the time, is still haunted by one particular image from his time in Nugra Salman jail: an old lady lying under the staircase in the communal cell. »She was dead,« he says, »and nobody seemed to take any notice of her« (in: Faima, 2011). Today he is a policeman, while his younger brother works as a guard at a construction site. Two other sons live in their own houses and do »business«. Faima's daughter is married and lives nearby. Faima recently recovered from an intervertebral disc operation and finds it difficult to move around. She talks slowly with a deep voice and mostly keeps her head down. She still has the hope that her husband will reappear; at the same time, she is haunted by images of the bodies of her husband and her brother being shovelled over with sand. She cannot sleep at night. Nor can she enjoy her new house or the affection of her children and grandchildren. »My heart is black« (Faima, 2011) she remarks and says she often feels an overwhelming desire to tie up a bundle and wander out into the desert.

She is also bitter about the lack of recognition for Anfal survivors, from both the Kurdistan and the Iraqi government. She says, her sons have badly paid jobs and struggle to survive, while former perpetrators and collaborators bask in wealth, influence and respect.

*Rabea*<sup>103</sup>

Rabea was born in the village of Koshky Xuarawa in 1955. Married to a distant relative from her village, she had six children when Anfal began. She was separated from her husband in their village and has never heard of him again. She was able to escape the troops and went into hiding with her six children. They spent months struggling with hunger and exhaustion in tents and provisional shelters, occasionally helped by some relatives. After Anfal she came to Sumud and managed to get a piece of land, where she built a room of bricks and wood. When she fled to Iran with her children in 1991, she stepped on a landmine. She was severely injured and taken to an Iranian hospital, where she spent weeks recovering. She lost one eye in the accident. After her return, she worked in the tomato fields and sold yoghurt to feed her six children.

Rabea was interviewed in the context of HAUKARI's testimony documentation project in 2002. In her narratives her Anfal memories and the memories of her mine accident in 1991 amalgamated to one story of pain. The interview was audiotaped, and when I looked at it later, I was stunned by the intense look of her remaining eye, telling the whole of what she had gone through. After I had lost track of her for some years I visited her again in 2011 and hardly recognized her. She welcomed me with overwhelming warmth and enthusiasm. Only now did I realize that she is a particularly tall and physically strong woman. She wore a green dress with a flower design; some flaming red henna-coloured curls of hair sprang out of her headscarf. Rabea lives today in a modern, well-equipped house on the outskirts of Kalar with two of her sons, their wives and five grandchildren. Her third son and her daughters are also married, live in the vicinity and regularly visit her. Rabea seems to be relaxed today; she supervises the big household, takes care of her grandchild-

**103** Names and biographical details have been changed.

dren and obviously enjoys her rich family life. However, she says, her heart remains »heavy« and she joins excursions and picnics only to please her sons, who want to see her happy. Since she left Sumud she greatly misses the company of other Anfal women. She clearly enjoyed the interview situation in 2011 as an occasion to speak out but also to connect again to the group of Anfal women she had been part of before; indeed, after the interview she contacted other Anfal women in Rizgary and began to join the memorial project activities.

#### *Hataw*<sup>104</sup>

Hataw was born in 1953 in the village of Khoratu. She was married to one of her cousins at the age of fifteen. The couple had seven children when Anfal began, and she was pregnant with her eighth. Her husband was a *peshmerga*. When the troops came to their village, Hataw was separated from him and her eldest, seventeen-year-old son. She and her other six children were captured by *jash* and brought to Topzawa. On the transport, she gave birth to a daughter, who died after some days. After some months of detention in Dibs, she was deported to Nugra Salman. Here her four-year-old son died in her arms of hunger and a disease that she thinks he caught from poisoned water. »You can forget everything, but not Anfal and the voice of my son, who kept saying he was hungry,«<sup>105</sup> she says (Hataw, 2012).

She brought five of her children home, however. After Anfal, she lived in a provisional house in Sumud. She fled to Iran with her children in 1991 and 1996. All through the 1990s, she worked as a day labourer in the agricultural fields. She joined the PUK and became an active cadre recruiting party members among Anfal survivors.

**104** Name has been changed.

**105** Interview with Hataw, 2012. See also Chapter 15.

After the fall of the Baath regime she moved to Kalar and lives there in one of the modest older townhouses with two of her sons and their wives and children. Her sons have never visited a school and are illiterate. One is a policeman; two of them work occasionally on construction sites. Hataw receives a *peshmerga* widow pension. Since her income is not sufficient to cover the family's living expenses, she works as a housekeeper in the local hospital.

Alongside with Suhaila, she testified in the Anfal trial at the Iraqi High Tribunal in 2006 and says she felt relieved and like newborn after confronting Saddam Hussein in the Trial and after he was executed. »Since Saddam is dead, the world belongs to us again« (Hataw, 2012).

Though I met Hataw on various occasions and at meetings in the 1990s, I first interviewed her only in 2010. I have seen her on a regular basis since then in project meetings and joint excursions to Erbil and Sulaimania. I visited her at her workplace in the hospital several times. In 2011, I conducted a second interview with her at her house, this time focusing on her testimony at the Iraqi High Tribunal and her perception of the changes in her life situation after 2003. And I was able to spend time with her outside her normal context, when she came to Germany with Suhaila in 2012 in the context of the memorial project activities.

Hataw is a small, thin and agile woman. Her face is wrinkled and marked by suffering and hard work. She has lost most of her teeth and has neither time nor money to repair them. She is pragmatic and does not waste too many words. Her interview statements and discussion contributions are sober and concise.

Though she suffers from severe heart problems, she says she is in good health and can work; but at other moments, she says she would prefer to rest and have more time for herself and to be with other Anfal women. The atmosphere in her house is friendly, but tense and marked by economic stress and hard work.

*Ex-detainees in Nugra Salman: Salima, Khadija and Djamil*<sup>106</sup>

In summer 2010, I was specifically looking for men and women who had been detained in Nugra Salman. A colleague took me to what is called the *gerek-î Nugrasalmanakan* – the quarter of the ex-Nugra-Salman detainees on the outskirts of Sumud that is still in extremely bad condition, with provisional clay dwellings, muddy access roads lined with garbage and pools of waste water. Quite a number of former prisoners from Nugra Salman lived here. Those who were spared the loss of first- and second-degree relatives were neither considered Anfal relatives nor were they granted the status of political prisoners. They thus fell through all nets of provision and not received pensions or housing subsidies. This made them both resentful and disheartened. But shortly after my visit to them, the Kurdistan Regional Government decreed their inclusion in pension schemes and housing programmes.

At my visit I met Djamil,<sup>107</sup> who was introduced to me as the »speaker« of the Nugra Salman detainees and who campaigns for recognition and relief for his group. He was ten years old when he was detained in Nugra Salman jail with his mother and his siblings after having been separated from his father. He has no notice on the latter's fate. Today in his early forties, he claims that after the horrific experience of Nugra Salman his whole life resembles that of a prisoner (Djamil, 2010). It was he who introduced me to some of the women in his neighbourhood.

I interviewed Khadija,<sup>108</sup> now a sixty-five-year-old woman. She survived Anfal with her husband, but lost two children in Nugra Salman. Three of her brothers and two sisters are still missing. Djamil had spoken to her in advance about my wish to interview her. While we were waiting for Khadija

**106** Names and biographical details have been changed.

**107** The name has been changed.

**108** The name and biographical data have been changed.

at Djamil's house, she suddenly burst in, protesting loudly. Djamil, she said, was the only reason she was prepared to talk to me, and she saw no sense in talking at all, as nobody had ever done anything for her or other Nugra Salman prisoners. Even sitting down for a cup of tea did nothing to calm her. She remained agitated throughout the interview, speaking aggressively and gesticulating angrily. She talked about her deportation to Nugra Salman jail and the harrowing images of hunger, violence and death deeply embedded in her mind ever since. She repeatedly stated, »They took us there to die« (Khadija, 2010). She also accused the Kurdistan Regional Government of ignoring the survivors and of paying court instead to the *jash* and the *mustashar*. Comprehending her story or attempting to visualize her concrete circumstances was almost impossible through the pain and the anger. Then - abruptly - she said, she had work to do at home and left.

On the same day I interviewed Salima,<sup>109</sup> a woman who particularly impressed me. Salima was born in 1958 in the village of Awa Spi. Salima is not what people in Sumud/Rizgary consider an »Anfal woman«. When Anfal began, her husband was on a trip outside Germyan and survived. The couple was reunited after Anfal. She had been captured in her village along with her three children. She was pregnant with her fourth child at the time. Like so many others, she was subjected to an odyssey through several transitional camps and finally deported to Nugra Salman, where she was detained for seven months. There she gave birth to her fourth child - a boy - but did not have sufficient milk to feed him. The infant died a few days after birth.

I met her in her new home, a modest, newly built house furnished in the traditional style, i.e. cement flooring and carpets along the wall. I was welcomed by one of her daughters who brought me tea and water. Salima came in after a while, apologizing. She was unwell and had been lying down.

**109** The name and biographical data have been changed.

She wore a dark green housedress and a black headscarf. Tall and thin, she was what is called a classic beauty, albeit with dark circles under her eyes. I was accompanied by a male colleague from the memorial project and Djamil, the aforementioned former child prisoner from Nugra Salman. Although both men remained in the room with us, they were deep in conversation with each other and rarely intervened.

I was immediately struck by Salima's narrative of her detention in Nugra Salman jail. When she recalled the lack of food and water, the beatings, the death of the children around her and finally the death of her own baby, she re-enacted the scenes in detail. Her eyes, wide open, were filled with fear and horror. Genuinely worried about her, I tried several times to lead her to less painful memories, but she remained immersed in the haunting picture. She claimed the Nugra Salman experience was her constant companion. She could still feel the soldiers' batons beating down on her shoulders and her back. She also declared she had developed a »sorrow tumour« (Salima, 2010) that caused all kinds of pain.

When I enquired about her current life, her mood changed utterly. She laughed and told me her husband was planning to take a second wife. She was not averse to the idea, she said, because she would have more time to rest. She also joked about it with the two men who accompanied me. I was unable to find out whether her husband had seriously entertained such plans.

*Fatma, Seyvan, Rezan, Runak and Shirin*<sup>110</sup>

In 1999, I had interviewed several other Anfal women, focusing primarily on their economic and social conditions in the aftermath of Anfal. I had no occasion to interview these women again after 2003, but their narratives, particularly

**110** Names and biographical data have been changed.

with regard to their work experience and their social conditions in the aftermath of Anfal, were vital to the first part of my research.

*Fatma* was born in the village of Zinana in 1953. During Anfal, she was detained with her two grown-up daughters in Dibs prison and lost her husband, two of her brothers and several cousins. »With Anfal our lives disappeared as well,« (Bakery, 1999) was how she summarized her experience.

*Seyvan* was born in the village of Koshk. She had been married for twelve days only when Anfal began and her husband disappeared. She herself managed to hide. Despite the short duration of her arranged marriage, she intensely hoped and waited to the return of her husband as the solution to all her problems.

*Rezan* was born in 1967 in the village of Qadir Karam. When the Anfal Campaign was launched, she was nineteen years old and had two small children aged one and three. She herself escaped Anfal only because she was visiting relatives in Kifri at the time. She has not seen her husband since. After Anfal, she shared a two-room house with her parents and two unmarried brothers. She lived in continuous struggle with her brothers over their attempts to remarry her and over the future of her children.

Fatma, Seyvan and Rezan all worked in a bakery project in Kifri, a rare income-generating project for Anfal women in the region. The interviews concentrated on their economic conditions and working lives.

*Runak* was born in 1950 in the village of Qadir Karam. She had five children between the ages of five and thirteen when Anfal began. She managed to escape capture by the troops, but her husband and brother were rounded up and deported. When I met her, Runak was living alone with her children; her parents, she said, had to look after her brother's wife and children. At the time, Runak was working in a sewing workshop set up by one of the political parties. For added income she sent her children out on the street to sell cigarettes and chewing gum. Like Fatma, Seyvan and Rezan,

she too was still hoping in 1999 – eleven years after Anfal – that her husband would return.

*Shirin*, from the village of Duragi, was twenty-five-years-old when I interviewed her in 1999. At the age of fifteen she had entered into a forced marriage with a much older man, who disappeared five weeks later during Anfal. Now pregnant, Shirin was detained in Dibs jail and gave birth to a daughter after her release. Her own and her husband's brothers were all missing. She lived at first with her mother-in-law, but eventually returned to her father's house. Apart from her daughter, she felt responsible for her parents and for her husband's mother and sisters. She was the only woman I met who was determined to remarry although she did worry about the separation from her daughter should she do so.

### *Other interviewees*

In addition, between 2008 and 2012, I listened to numerous narrations of Anfal women within the framework of the Anfal memorial project. These narratives often developed into spontaneous interview situations, some of which I audiotaped or commented on in written form. I often met and talked to *Naila*,<sup>111</sup> for instance, whose husband had been a political prisoner in Abu Ghraib from 1976 to 1984. Three and a half years after his release, he was deported during Anfal and Naila lost all track of him. She was able to escape the troops with five children; her then three-year-old daughter died in her arms during the flight. Naila regularly attends meetings within the framework of the memorial project and talks without difficulty about her experience and emotions. However, she says, her heart aches like an open wound; the pain does not become less.

**111** The name has been changed.

I frequently visited *Kafia*,<sup>112</sup> who lost her entire family – twenty-two people – during Anfal, but was herself able to hide in a bread oven and survived. She is a strong woman, but in a bewildered state and can be seen roaming through the streets of Sumud. I also spent a lot of time with *Akhtar*,<sup>113</sup> a tiny lady of over eighty years of age, who has a rugged face and always wears black. She and her husband survived Anfal, but lost all of their four children and six grandchildren. Every time I meet her she says she had been happy to have a daughter as she did not expect the soldiers would take women away, and gesticulates to show how she last saw her daughter surrounded by her six children and one »in her belly« (Akhtar, 2010). *Kafia*, *Akhtar* and other women who have nobody to rely on used to come to every memorial project meeting and stay until the very end. Although they rarely participate in discussions, they enjoy the company of their fellow survivors.

*Second-generation survivors: Roshna,<sup>114</sup> Gulistan and Halala*

I also draw on a series of conversations and interviews with second-generation Anfal survivors. *Roshna* had been interviewed in the HAUKARI testimony archive project in 2002. She was twenty years old at the time. She talked about her fatherless youth, the hardships her mother had endured to bring up her children and her own disappointment at the lack of assistance for her family, while Saddam Hussein and other perpetrators were treated handsomely. Since *Roshna* has meanwhile moved away from Rizgary with her mother, a second, more recent interview was not possible.

I also had many occasions to meet and talk to Suhaila's daughter *Gulistan* and Habsa's daughter *Halala*. Both young

**112** The name has been changed.

**113** The name has been changed.

**114** The names and biographical data have been changed.

women are the same age. They were born around the beginning of the Anfal Campaign and are close friends. Gulistan recently obtained a university degree and married a fellow student. Halala was absent from school for a few years, but has now taken studies at university. Both daughters resemble their mothers: Gulistan is tall, light-skinned and serious, with graceful movements; Halala is small and agile, laughs a lot and is resolute in her speech and movement. During the many afternoons we spent together, they told me about their own Anfal memories, about the veil of suffering that cast a shadow over their childhood and about their strong sense of responsibility towards their mothers and the missing. They allowed me to spend some time with them and their friends from school and university, and thus to share their daily lives.

*Men Anfal survivors: Mam Khalil and Haji Ibrahim*

Though my research focus is on women Anfal survivors, I also interviewed some men survivors. Among them was *Mam Khalil*,<sup>115</sup> a native of the village of Omar Bill. His age is unclear, since he does not know his exact date of birth. Judging from his childhood memories, he was probably born between 1925 and 1928, i.e. he was in his early sixties at the beginning of the Anfal Campaign. He used to be a farmer, and at the time had a wife and six children between the ages of ten and twenty-two. He was captured with his wife and children but was separated from them in Topzawa camp. Eventually deported to Nugra Salman jail, he was detained in a communal cell with hundreds of other men for seven months. From the cell windows they could see the building where women and children were detained, and sometimes they heard them screaming and crying. He said he witnessed hundreds of deaths in Nugra Salman and had occasionally seen dead

**115** The name and biographical data have been changed.

bodies buried in the sand around the prison: »Black dogs ate the dead bodies at night« (Khalil, 2010). Mam Khalil was not sure whether his family was also there at the same time. His hopes for a reunion with them did not materialize. He has not seen them since. He received a piece of land in Sumud from the Baath regime and lived in a provisional shelter for several years. Unable to work, he had no wish to return to his own village because of the memories that haunted him. He initially survived with the help of one of his brothers and remarried three or four years after Anfal. His new wife's former husband was killed as a *peshmerga*. She had five children whom she brought into the marriage with Mam Khalil. The couple had another two daughters after Anfal.

Habsa introduced me to Mam Khalil and later accompanied me to his house. A small man with a friendly face and lively eyes, Mam Khalil wears traditional Kurdish clothes, including a turban. He did not wish me to enter his house, so we sat outside in the shade of a low wall close to a public rubbish dump. Mam Khalil burst into tears as soon as he began to talk about his memories. Hardly any of the women I had interviewed cried in the interview situation. Habsa began to cry, too, and said, »It's always the men who cry. When I see our men crying, I have to cry too« (in: Khalil, 2010). Unlike Anfal women, who spoke frequently among themselves about their past, Mam Khalil had obviously had little occasion to share his experience, particularly in the light of the »new« family life he had embarked upon with his current wife.<sup>116</sup>

The same seems to be true of *Haji Ibrahim*, who comes to the memorial project office every day to spend time with the staff and other survivors. Also in his eighties, he is tall and wears traditional Kurdish clothes. He lost his wife, two sons and two daughters during Anfal. Another of his sons was shot by the Iraqi army in 1995 while smuggling goods across the Iraqi frontline. Haji Ibrahim did not remarry and

**116** See Chapter 15.

lives with his last surviving son. He has a great need to talk and I carried out several short interviews with him on different period of his life. In his narrations, his memories of Anfal losses and the later death of his son fused into one long narrative of pain. At the same time, he emanates a sense of serenity and is friendly and helpful towards others. Since the beginning of the Anfal memorial project, he uses every occasion to be near the project staff or spend time with other survivors. The encounters with Mam Khalil and Haji Ibrahim helped me to understand the specific loneliness and silence around men survivors. Though I cannot elaborate further on this issue within the here presented research, it will be touched upon again in Chapter 15.

#### *Other key figures - Gulala Germyani and Mam Pola*

In the course of my research, I relied heavily on two persons who greatly contributed to my understanding of living conditions in Germyan and the specific circumstances of Anfal survivors. The first is Gulnaz Aziz Qadir, known as *Gulala Germyani*, who is a native of Kalar, a town in the immediate vicinity of Rizgary. She was fourteen when Anfal began. Numerous members of her extended family disappeared or were killed. I first met Gulala in 1993 when she was working with the local PUK women's union and several local NGOs that supported Anfal women. She was the first to give me a detailed analysis of the interrelation between patriarchal, traditional Germyan society and the immobility of Anfal women at the time and their prolonged grief at the time. Elected as a member of the Kurdistan Regional Parliament in 2003, Gulala founded a parliamentary working group for Anfal women and became the voice of Germyan women in the Kurdish capital. Anfal survivors respect her highly as one of the few politicians committed to their case. She left parliament after only one term of office, but still lives in Erbil. She is married with three children but continues to be engaged in in various committees and activities with and for women

Anfal survivors. She was one of the initiators and continues to be an active member of the memorial forum project in Sumud-Rizgary, came to Germany for conferences and exchanges within the project several times. More recently she has also engaged in the set up of the Iraqi wide association of mothers and wives of missing persons Ship of Life.

I also relied on my husband's knowledge and experience. He joined the PUK *peshmerga* units in the mid-1980s and experienced the Anfal operations in Germyan as a *peshmerga*. He witnessed the death of numerous civilians and fellow combatants. His eldest brother disappeared, as did members of his extended family, neighbours and friends. He and some of his unit survived and eventually withdrew to Iran. Deeply disturbed by the lack of respect and support for Anfal survivors from the Kurdish political parties and the Kurdistan Regional Government after 1991, he engaged in local and international aid activities in the Germyan region. He is a co-founder of the German NGO, HAUKARI, and today works in aid projects for female victims of social and political violence. He is also involved in the Anfal Women Memorial Forum Project in Rizgary.

My husband and Gulala accompanied my research closely. They gave me additional context information and multiple insights into local specifics, and in many instances they helped me make sense of or question and verify the information I received from Anfal survivors.



## 6 Narrating Anfal - women survivors' »subjective truth«

Twenty-five years after the Anfal Campaign, the experience is still omnipresent in Germyan today. In people's talk, history is divided into before and after Anfal; no conversation fails to refer to Anfal as a point of reference. The perpetrator term »Anfal« became a colloquialism for the victims: people refer to their disappeared relatives as *enfalakan* (the Anfals) or say »my husband and my daughter are Anfal«. People use also terms like *ema aîd-î Enfalîn* (we belong to Anfal).<sup>117</sup>

In the 1990s, Anfal seemed to cover the region like a blanket of thick fog. The scene was dominated at that time by Anfal women and their children. They were easy to identify: in the mornings they used to sit in large groups at the entrance roads to Sumud along the Kalar-Kifri link road. They wore black *abayas*<sup>118</sup> and waited for someone to give them work in the agricultural fields. They queued at water points,

**117** To my knowledge, no critical debate has taken place in Iraqi Kurdistan – either among the survivors, in the Kurdish political parties, or within the government – on the use of the perpetrator term for this genocidal operation. Several publications and a number of survivors employ the term *karesat* (catastrophe) to describe Anfal. As Andrea Fischer-Tahir shows, the more recent intellectual and academic debates on Anfal introduced the term »genocide against the Kurds«, which reflects the attempt to link Anfal to other catastrophes such as the Holocaust and the genocide in Rwanda (Fischer-Tahir 2012).

**118** Elder women in Germyan are used to wearing the *abaya*, a long black cloak covering their head and body, when they move outside their houses and walk on the streets.

health centres and government offices and sat in front of their houses in the evenings. Their faces were a testimony to their physical and psychological scars. They looked like public symbols of mourning, representing the suffering of the entire region.

Since most women Anfal survivors had lost their husbands, they were addressed as *bewa-jin-î Anfal* - Anfal women without men. Local and international NGOs referred to them as *Anfal widows* or registered them as *female-headed households*, equally defining them through the absence of their male kin. And indeed, at first sight the loss of their relatives was the most prominent element in their narrations. Countless conversations began with the sentence *kes-im nemewe* (I have no one left), followed by a long list of the missing: »My husband is gone, three of my sons are gone, one daughter is gone, three brothers, six cousins...«<sup>119</sup>

But apart from the loss of sometimes dozens of relatives, women Anfal survivors were themselves victims of physical and psychological violence and aggression from the perpetrators. These experiences were sidelined in the aftermath of Anfal by the more predominant motif of disappearance and loss.

Following, I examine Anfal women's narratives on the Anfal events, their »subjective truth« (Laub, 1992) from within the experience of violence itself. I describe the principal motifs and images that run through their narrations and try to grasp the attendant emotions. I will show how their individual narrations reflect the traumatic shock they suffered and still suffer to this day and how they develop a collective narrative of suffering that helps them to keep the memory

**119** The women use the active voice, e.g., *mêrdekem roy, birakem roy, dû xushkim roy*« (my husband, brothers, sisters went...), to describe their relatives' disappearances. Hence the focus lies on the absence of the relatives rather than the women's own loss or the act of the perpetrators. I have rarely heard women say, »I lost my husband« or »the Army deported my husband«.

alive and cope with it at the same time. I collected most of the women's testimonies referred to in this chapter in the 1990s and early 2000, before the fall of the Baath regime, though I will also anticipate some of their narrations from a later period.

### **6.1 Trauma narrations - between denial and speaking out**

The trauma literature describes at length the difficulties victims of violence have in speaking about their experience. However, the reasons for keeping silent about a traumatic experience can be multiple: some survivors remain silent due to a sense of shame or guilt or because speaking about the »unspeakable« would be tantamount to a repeat of the experience itself, and thus unbearable. Silence can also be a symptom of dissociation and the repression of memories. Others are condemned to silence by an adverse political or social environment or by social taboos. In therapeutic terms, *breaking the silence* or *speaking out* about traumatic experiences is largely considered an important stage in processing the trauma (see for example Herman, 1992). Reddemann and Sachsse (1997) emphasize instead the protective side of silence and argues against the perception of *speaking out* as a necessary precondition of treating trauma.

When I first met Anfal women, I was prepared for great hesitancy in speaking about Anfal and was surprised at the ease with which they described the most horrendous memories they carried inside them.

There are, of course, women Anfal survivors who have never spoken about their experience and still refuse to do so. Suhaila's aunt, for example, now a seventy-year-old woman, lost her husband, two sons and a daughter during Anfal. When the women sit together and the word Anfal arises, she gets up, goes to another room, lies down facing the wall and falls asleep. Her grandniece once explained: »Don't think

she's being impolite. It's just that sleep comes over her like mercy whenever someone mentions Anfal.«<sup>120</sup>

Most of the women I met, however, talk about Anfal constantly and willingly. They did it five years after Anfal and they are still doing it today. I cannot remember a meeting within my work for reconstruction projects in the 1990s in which the work issues at hand were immediately discussed; instead the women would first go through long rounds of narratives, detailing their Anfal experience. Most of the time, several women spoke simultaneously, invoking their memories and mutually supplementing their stories.

Although their narrations were of fierce intensity and testified to unheard-of atrocities, they were often told without visible signs of emotion or arousal. The women seldom cried during meetings or interviews. Nor did they beat their breasts or their legs, as Kurdish women are wont to do in times of utter despair or grief. Their accounts were detailed but fragmented, unstructured, imprecise in terms of time and location, and often at odds with historical facts.

Often, appalling images of torture and death were almost casually mentioned, while other, quite profane details were recounted with meticulous accuracy. At one moment the women would recall monstrous crimes and in the next, literally »rest« on some seemingly insignificant detail, such as the weather or the food they had eaten. It was as if they needed to take the emotion out of memory and reassure themselves with the simple but reliable things in life. This »uneven precision« (German: *ungleichmäßige Detailliertheit*; Birck 2002; 146, quoted from Ottomeyer 2011, p.74)<sup>121</sup> in their narrations, the concomitance of detailed and

**120** Conversation with Gulistan, autumn 2009.

**121** Much of the late Angelika Birck's work focused on trauma survivors who had sought asylum in Germany, where they were subjected to humiliating procedures that prolonged their trauma. The fragmentation, unevenness and ambivalence in the narration of their traumatic experiences rendered them implausible in the eyes of the police and legal experts.

tormenting memories (hypermnnesia) and memory gaps (amnesia) (Ottomeyer 2011, p. 80), as well as the introduction of moments of rest and what Ottomeyer (2011, p. 75) defines as *reality checks* (German: Wirklichkeitskontrollen) are typical elements of trauma narratives.

I initially interpreted Anfal women's narrations as the desire to speak out and to »let the world know«. With time, however, I realized that their constant and repetitive flow of storytelling was not audience- or dialogue-oriented. Nor did it appear to bring relief. Interrupting the flow proved difficult and asking questions in the hope of going into the details of certain aspects was often futile.<sup>122</sup>

The women's narrations seemed to rather serve the purpose of erecting a wall of protection between Anfal women and others, between their lived-in (past) world and the here and now. What Judith Herman describes as the central dialectic of trauma - the permanent oscillation between the »will to deny horrible events and the will to proclaim them aloud« (Herman 1992, p.1) - was tangible in the narratives of women Anfal survivors. At one and the same time, their narratives were proclamation and concealment.

People who have survived atrocities often tell their stories in a highly emotional, contradictory and fragmented manner that undermines their credibility and serves the twin imperatives of truth-telling and secrecy (Herman 1992, p.1).

In Kurdish public discourse, this contradictory, disrupted and repetitive character of Anfal women's narratives is often cited to devaluate them as implausible or far-fetched.

**122** Choman Hardi (2011, p. 9) describes similar experiences she had when interviewing Anfal women between 2005 and 2010. »Without stopping or waiting for questions, they immediately start talking about their Anfal experiences. It is almost like pressing the play button on a tape recorder (...) It was sometimes difficult to ask a question and disrupt this flow of information«. However, she interprets this mode of narrating rather as a result of the many interviews Anfal women gave to external visitors and considers it a kind of »cultivated narrative«.

Even some of our Kurdish colleagues in the rehabilitation programmes were not immune to this attitude and happened to lose patience with the women's narrations, discrediting them as *bol-e-bol* (wailing or lamenting). While the testimonies of Anfal women are more frequently referred to in today's public discourse, albeit reduced to the role of passive symbols of victimhood, they were non-existent in the public debate, in the local media and even in official Anfal ceremonies in the 1990s. Interviews with Anfal women on the communist television channel AZADI in 1996 (also analyzed for this thesis) were a rare exception at the time.<sup>123</sup> Anfal narratives remained for the most part enclosed within the survivor community of Gernyan.

## **6.2 Trauma images - dominant and recurring motifs in Anfal women's narrations**

All of the Anfal women experienced a massive attack on their physical and psychological integrity and the destruction of their life worlds, families and social structures. Their individual experiences were manifold; yet beyond differing individual details, their narrations share common motifs, at times recounted with identical wording.

*»We had a beautiful life before« - sudden rupture and shock*

Although the Gernyan region was the scene of armed conflict between Iraqi government troops and Kurdish *pesh-merga* forces long before the Anfal Campaign, the women tend to depict their lives in the villages prior to Anfal as »beautiful and good lives«. They speak of fertile, green landscapes, relative affluence and a vibrant social life; there is

**123** I received copies of these interviews from a member of the communist TV station AZADI in Sulaimania in 1997.

no mention of the conflict and the fear that permeated their lives long before Anfal or the hardships of daily life in an underserved region. Fatma (1999) described her life in the village of Zinana:

We had a wonderful life in Zinana. We had agriculture, we had a garden in front of our house, we had several tractors in the village. Zinana was a beautiful village and it was big, close to the road. We had everything we needed. And then Anfal came. My husband is Anfal, one of my brothers and two cousins.

*Mahsum*<sup>124</sup> from the village of Germik in the Dawde region lost her husband, sons and daughters and numerous relatives in the course of Anfal and was the sole survivor in her family. When her village was bombed she lost her right arm. She died in 2000. In 1996 she told me:

Germik was near to a river. We had a wonderful life there. As women we used to work in the fields, make bread and wash clothes and dishes in the river. We always had guests: relatives and my husband's friends as well. We were known all over Dawde for our hospitality, we always had guests. We used to have a full house – my daughters and I would cook huge pots of rice... on the open fire... We did everything outside... And if we had nothing to do, we met at the water points and had a chat. The water point – that was our post office. Germik was full of trees. Nobody can imagine that now, but there were date palms all around (work protocols, 1996).

Such an idealized and idyllic image of life before Anfal reflects the women's perception of Anfal as having come suddenly and unexpectedly over their lives. Narrations of the Anfal experience often begin with sentences such as »(...) I was in the garden when the soldiers came.« or »We were eating when the helicopter attacked our village«. Many Anfal women use terms such as *Anfal le serman hat* (Anfal descended upon us), echoing the shock about the ins-

**124** The name and locations have been changed.

tant rupture to what had been their life worlds before Anfal. This approach demonstrates also their retrospective view of themselves as innocent victims of an unforeseen attack, sidelining previous conflicts and their active support for the resistance. It thus indicates how the dominant Kurdish discourse on Anfal as a sudden attack on innocent civilians is inextricably bound up with the women's own perceptions and memories.

Even Suhaila, who had been politically active, imprisoned and tortured and who had witnessed her brother's brutal assassination before Anfal, defined herself in the 1990s primarily as an *Anfal woman*. Likewise Fatma and Mahsum she referred to idyllic images of pastoral life and hospitality when talking about her life prior to Anfal. At that time, her narrative focused on Anfal, crystallizing it as the »main« trauma out of her many experiences of savage violence. It was only much later that her traumatic experience prior to Anfal came to the fore in her accounts.<sup>125</sup>

*»There was no escape« - powerlessness*

A number of women in Germyan managed to escape the encirclement by Iraqi troops. Some were absent from their villages when Anfal began and learned about the destruction of their villages and the disappearance of their relatives from afar, sometimes much later.

Runak and her husband were visiting relatives in Kirkuk at the time. When they heard rumours about the Anfal Campaign, Runak's husband returned to their village, Qadir Qaram:

... He went there to get his mother out - because of this Anfal - and bring her to Kirkuk. Two of my brothers and three cousins went with Anfal. ... I was in Kirkuk. What I know is that government

**125** See Chapter 15.

troops encircled them and they were inside as well. Nobody saw them again. ... People said they were encircled and are gone. I hadn't a chance, I couldn't go there and no one could get to me and give me news. They weren't allowed. And then after fifteen days I knew they were no longer there ... the troops had taken them. Ali Hassan al-Majid encircled everything, everyone remained in Qadir Qaram for three days, they were still there then. And they said to them, »You don't have to be afraid, we'll take over the government here.« Then the helicopter came and they rounded people up and took them away. This is what people told me. And there was no escape (Runak, 1999).

The troops that attacked Suhaila's village gave those who were not regarded as *peshmerga* the opportunity to surrender. Suhaila recalls:

When they came to our village, they allowed us to go to the towns and surrender. I went to the town, but then I hid in the house of relatives. My brother did the same. My father, my brother, my sisters - all of them saved themselves. But my husband was captured. He was an active supporter of the resistance (Suhaila, 1999).

Suhaila has not seen her husband again. Until 2003 she kept waiting for his return. To this day, she frequently recalls the scene of separation from her husband with unchanged intensity:

I still see him here before me. I know exactly what he was wearing. I had made his suit myself. It was made of fine material and I had woven nylon thread into it. If his body was found in a grave today, I'd be able to recognize him by the nylon thread. He also has a photograph of our daughter in his pocket. He stretched his arms out to me and my daughter (she shows how he stretched out his arms). He said, »Suhaila, take care of this child.« And the soldiers dragged us away from each other. I held my daughter tight. (She gestures how she kept her daughter in one arm and with the other arm fought off the soldiers who were dragging her away from her husband. Her movements are dramatic. She re-

enacts the scene with intensity and is breathless and exhausted afterwards) (Suhaila, 2011).

Runak and Suhaila both witnessed Anfal in relative security. Runak's account reflects her sense of powerlessness and her continuous attempt to reconstruct in the aftermath what happened to her husband, her relatives and her village. She argues with herself in the account, as if something could still have been done: »They were still there then« but »There was no escape.« And Suhaila frequently and repetitively refers to the powerful memory of her final moment with her husband. The picture she draws symbolizes her emotional bond with her husband and the obligation she feels towards him, as well as her diffuse sense of guilt at having abandoned him to his fate.

Other women escaped encirclement by the troops at the last moment and hid in the hills of Germyan, like Seyvan:

My husband was among those encircled in our village. I was able to escape. I hid under a tractor and then fled with others. We hid for days and then very slowly made our way to Kifri. I was so lucky. I never saw him again. No sign of him, no news, nothing, nothing (Seyvan, 1999).

When the soldiers came to Kafia's village, they asked the people to surrender. Her whole family surrendered, but she did not:

I knew we were all going to die. I called them, I said don't go. They wouldn't listen to me. I ran off and hid in a bread oven. I don't know how long I stayed there. My feet were burnt because the oven was so hot. Twenty-two of my relatives have gone. I never saw them again, I have no one left. After they had gone, I hid in the hills, I don't know for how long. I finally came to Sumud (Kafia, 2010).

Kafia is in a state of confusion to this day. When she talks about Anfal, it is mostly in the form of a lament, in which she recites the names of her lost relatives. The image of the bread oven and her burnt feet is one of the rare memories

she talks about with clarity. It is the last moment she remembers herself being in control, a person of decision, before the abyssal experience of losing her entire life world in one day engulfed her – almost a blanket image to cover other repressed memories.

Other women were helped to escape the encirclement by Kurdish *jash* in an act of clemency or sudden regret when they realized the lethal dimension of Anfal. Habsa recalls:

When the troops came they took the men away first. We had forty-eight men. They took them all away on the truck. To us they said, »Go away, go to the towns. Your men will come later, in twenty days.« I had six children and was pregnant with the seventh. The children were all around me. There were my two sisters, each of them with four children. We didn't know where to go. A *jash* helped us. He knew our father and brought us to an empty house. But more people arrived. And it was dangerous because we could have been discovered quickly. So we went outside and hid behind a wall. We had one blanket for each family. And some bread. I gave birth to my son there. My father found us and took my children out one by one. He came at night and took one child at a time. He brought them outside the encirclement to a safe place in Baghdad. In the end it was just me and my daughter, she was two years old then. And the baby. (...) Step by step we somehow managed to get through the military circle and arrived in Kalar. My father hid us in a ditch and brought us food every day. I stayed in this hole with the two children for four months. We left it only when the amnesty was announced and then came to Sumud (Habsa, 2010).

*»We did not know anything about what happened« - disorientation and fear - Payman's odyssey account*

Payman was severely injured in a bomb attack on her village in 1987, eight months before the Anfal Campaign was launched. She was referred to a government hospital in Tuz Khurmatu and then subjected to an odyssey through vari-

ous hospitals and detention centres for more than a year. Absorbed by her own ordeal, she only realized the disappearance of her husband and four of her five children after her release in September 1988. I will quote her narration at length, since it is a shattering testimony of fear and disorientation both in structure and content:

I come from Duragi. Our village was bombed in 1987, I think it was the 6th of October ... I don't know, but I'm certain it was autumn. ... It was nine o'clock in the morning when the planes came. ... It was nine o'clock in the morning. They bombed our village and many of us were injured. Forty people were killed and many injured. My cousin's daughter, my father and I were injured. The people put us on a tractor and brought us first to another village, Alian, and then to a doctor. Those who were not that badly injured were brought to a *peshmerga* doctor in Bani Mird. But we were seriously injured, I, my father and my cousin's daughter. They said they had to go to a hospital down there ... in Iraq. And they brought us to the hospital in Tuz. They first put us on a vehicle, a tractor; we were seriously injured, bleeding. My father was hit in the stomach; I was injured in the back. We first came to Bnari Gil. The doctor was a *peshmerga*. He looked at us and said, »They need to go to a hospital.« The *peshmerga* stopped our vehicle on the road and looked at everything ... the tractor was loaded with other things. They took everything out, the animals as well. The people who were with us said, »These people are in a dangerous situation, they have to go to a hospital.« Then we got to Tuz, and there ... Before we had a *peshmerga* doctor - his name was Jasim - he helped us a bit. We were bleeding a lot so he covered our wounds. And then in Tuz, they said, »Uhhh, who did this for you? Is this the work of a *peshmerga* doctor? So, you're all traitors.« And we said, »No, we did it ourselves.« ...

In Tuz they did nothing to us, no beating or anything. They transferred us straightaway to the hospital in Kirkuk. They did surgery there on my father. My cousin's daughter didn't talk for fifteen days. She didn't speak a single word. Her name was Fatima. Her head was hit, she didn't talk. As for me, my situation was even

worse. We stayed two months in Kirkuk. I was so badly injured that I couldn't look after myself. My mother stayed with me and helped. We were closed in there, we were prisoners, I mean: my father, my mother, my cousin's daughter and me. And then, when I felt a bit better, they sent my mother home. They said, »Go to your house, your daughter will come home after a while, too.« So my mother left. But we remained in Kirkuk. ... We stayed there for four months. After some time they came and said, »You will also be free now.« And they put us in a car and brought us to Tikrit. They took us to a police station, and we were detained there. We stayed there for six or seven months, me and my cousin's daughter, we were together. Then my cousin's daughter was set free. Her mother came and took her away. Her mother came, she was very clever. She got her daughter out of there. I am very glad that she took her out of there. They were violent towards her. She was the same age my daughter is now ... here's my daughter with the red dress (she points to her daughter). And her mother took her out of there. She said to me, »Payman, come with us, can you walk?« I said, »No, it's impossible.« My legs didn't work at all then and they still don't. I said, »No there's no way I can manage the walk.« And she said to me, »Payman, don't blame me. I'm going to take my daughter out of here. I don't want her to stay here.« Then she really did take her. And they went and I stayed. And I was with Arab, Kurdish and Turkmen women, all mixed, and also Anfals. We didn't know anything then, that our villages were Anfal, that our relatives were Anfal, whether our villages were destroyed or not ... Once my mother came. She was crying. I said, »Why are you crying?« She said, »I'm crying for you. ... they're all gone, your brothers, your sister, your cousin ... And me? My husband and four of my children are gone ... I have nobody left ...« So she cried for me. And then we stayed there six months. At Ramazan we were still in Tikrit, and then for the Qurban feast they said, »You will be released now.« But that was a lie. They brought us to another prison, to Samarra, far away. We stayed there a long time - a year and a month... Altogether

we were a year and four months in prison.<sup>126</sup> ... so we stayed there and there was a lot of violence towards us. Soldiers came in all the time and beat us with their shoes. Me personally ... they didn't beat me personally... I was, yes ... what was I? ... I was weak, I didn't speak Arabic, I was Kurdish. ... But they beat the Arabs regularly and I was always afraid they would beat me and hurt me as well.<sup>127</sup>

But in Tikrit, when my cousin's daughter was taken away by her mother, I was terribly afraid. I said, oh, God only knows if they'll explode with anger and what they will do to me. What if they're violent with me or cut off my head or kill me ... I was terribly scared. And then one of them came to me. He spoke Kurdish. He said, »Sit down, this afternoon they will interrogate you, but don't be afraid, they won't harm you.« Then in the afternoon, someone in charge came and asked me, »How could this happen? How could this girl escape? How could her mother take her?« And I said, »I couldn't do anything, I was sitting in the yard.« And I said, »My cousin's daughter got up and said I'll be right back.« I just remained seated. I couldn't walk, I couldn't even move my legs (she sighs and stops) and – with respect to you<sup>128</sup> – apart from my injury, I was also pregnant. And then they came into the yard and said in Arabic: »Uen Fatima, uen Fatima« (where is Fatima, where is Fatima?) I replied in Kurdish that I didn't speak Arabic. I said, »I don't know anything, I didn't notice anything. You know, I was sitting outside in the yard and even if you kill me or whatever you do to me, I can't do anything about it.« And then they said, »We won't harm you.« But I was thinking, »Oh God, now they are going to do violence to me.« They

**126** Payman was injured in October 1987 and released per amnesty in September 1988, so that the actual duration of her imprisonment was nine months.

**127** She uses the Arabic word *ta'ada*, meaning »doing violence to somebody«. It can be used for all forms of violence, e.g., beating, torture and rape.

**128** Kurdish people use the expression »with respect to you« to avoid saying something regarded as intimate or shameful and that would not normally be communicated to people outside their own family.

took me from the room I stayed in and put me in another room. They took my clothes and my money and closed the door. And the soldier said, »danisha« (Kurdish for: sit down). This was the only word he knew in Kurdish, »danisha«, and then they closed the door. I sat on the bed and cried all the time. I thought, »Oh God, what will they do to me now?« And then they came the next morning and took me to yet another room. They didn't bring me back to the room I was in before. This time I was with Arab women. Yes, and then we were in Samarra. The war was already over by then (she refers here to the Iran-Iraq war), but we didn't know anything. We didn't know that Anfal had happened, that our villages were destroyed, that my brother was not there anymore, my sister, or that my husband and children were no longer there, that they were all gone, all killed ... nothing, we knew nothing about all that.

And then one day, the *sabot* (military official) came and said, »Tomorrow you go home.« And I was so happy and said, »I'm going home to my house and my children.« Then my father came - God bless him, he's dead now - he had rented a car, a *Brazili*,<sup>129</sup> and came there. He came to me in Samarra. Suddenly they called me and my father was there at the door. He said, »Payman, come, we're leaving.« And I said, »How can I leave?« He said, there's been an amnesty, I've come to get you. He had come to my place to get me! And I was so happy. My father put me in the car and we left for Tikrit. Yes, we went back to Tikrit. And they insulted us there again and asked, »How could this girl escape?« Then we went to Kirkuk, and we were interrogated again. Then they filled out some papers for us and we went to Arbat. Two soldiers were still with us. Arbat was full of people. They came from Halabja and were Kurds like us from Germyan, from Anfal. And then we left and I was still happy. I said, »We're going home, we're going to see our relatives, I'll see my children.« But my father, he knew. On the road he started to cry. He said, »We have no one

**129** *Brazili* is a nickname for a Volkswagen Passat car model. Since Iraq imported these cars from a Volkswagen factory in Brazil, they were known as *Brazili*.

left, no brother, neither this nor that, they are all gone, they are all Anfal, our village is gone ...» and we both began to cry.

And then we came to my sister's house here in Sumud. Her house was over there, you can see it from here, here near the school. It was noon. We sat down. My daughter was there, the one you see here. I had five children. Then we went to bed, it was nine o'clock at night. My daughter began to cry. I said, »Daughter, what is it? Why are you crying?« She said, »Mother, all your children died in Nugra Salman.«

Four of my children died in Nugra Salman. They were eaten by black dogs. This daughter told me. She said, »Mother, your children were eaten by black dogs«. Nothing has been done for us ever since. Wherever we go, wherever we refer to, no one can do anything for us. Our suffering will never end (Payman, 2002).

Payman's account is an unsettling testimony of disorientation, horror and disbelief. She talks quickly and angrily. Her account is difficult to follow, as she jumps between locations and time periods. The fact that she was pregnant in detention is mentioned only at random in a subordinate clause. I only caught it myself when I was transcribing the interview. When I asked her about it later on, Payman said that the baby had died immediately. She gave no details about the birth or the weeks thereafter.<sup>130</sup> She draws the listener into her feelings of disorientation during her detention: she mentions several times that she had no information about Anfal, she lets the listener share the tension and the hopes she entertained throughout her captivity until the very last minute, when she arrives in Sumud only to discover that her children are dead. »My daughter began to cry. I said, ›Daughter, what is it? (...)« She said, ›Mother, all your children died in Nugra Salman.« She talks about this grim moment in a compara-

**130** Choman Hardi (2011, p.5) tells a similar story about a female interviewee who did not mention in her Anfal testimony that she had given birth to a child in detention. Hardi interprets this as an indicator of repressed gendered experience during Anfal.

tively unemotional, almost banal manner, which reflects her disbelief as well as her attempt to keep emotional distance to the unbearable knowledge.

Many Anfal women's accounts are similarly constructed: long passages containing meticulous descriptions of the various stages of their ordeal. The escape from one village to another ahead of approaching troops; transport in closed trucks, herded together with others on long journeys through various police stations and detention centres. Most of the women were illiterate, had rarely had occasion to move outside the village and did not speak the language of the perpetrators. The loss of orientation at the moment of attack translates into an uneven and disorganized narrative structure. The list of locations is confusing and not chronological. The women skip back and forth from one time period to another. They report certain conversations verbatim and spell out details that seem to be peripheral or irrelevant. On the other hand, they touch on deeply emotional or horrific moments almost »by the way«. Hence the content and structure of the »odyssey stories« embody the women's loss of sense of reality during Anfal.

*»I gave birth to the baby the evening they took the young people away« - violence and separation - Faima's account*

Most of the women from southern Germyan were captured in their home villages by Iraqi soldiers or Kurdish militia. Those who managed to escape shortly before their arrival fled from village to village but were finally surrounded and captured at »collection points« such as Qadir Qaram, Mela Sura or Maidan. From here they were taken to Topzawa, a military camp south of Kirkuk, where the men were separated from the women, and younger women from women with children.

Faima's (2002) account of Anfal begins with a lengthy and detailed description of how she, her parents and her siblings left their village with a group of *peshmerga* as Iraqi troops

approached. Her brother, a member of the *peshmerga* forces, had come with his unit to the village to take his family out of the circle. Another brother was instead a soldier with the Iraqi Army.

He said, »I don't want you to fall into the hands of the government.« Then he went off to get a car for us but was hit by a bomb on the way and died. Then people began to flee. My father went to get my brother's body and then we fled as well. There were bombs everywhere. We came to Qulawa. People saw my father carrying my brother's body. They took him and buried him.<sup>131</sup> We stayed there overnight. The troops came the next morning. Two of the *peshmerga* went off and came back with a donkey. They put my mother on the donkey and said to her, »Don't cry.«

With painstaking attention to detail, she recounts their exhausting trek from village to village, day and night.

We came to Alian, then to Kani Ubed. The *peshmerga* said to my father, »Come on we'll carry you on our shoulders.« But my father said, »No, I can walk, but you have to bring my children to safety. My sons can help themselves; you have to take care of the women.«

When we came to Kani Ubed, it was already empty. My father said to the *peshmerga*, »You should leave us.« But they said, »No, we won't leave you on your own, even if they kill us.« Then the troops came and we fled again. The *peshmerga* accompanied us as far as Alian. But then my father said, »Even if we die, we have to rest and eat.« We all sat down, we prepared food. We had rice and zucchini.

There is a striking contrast in Faima's narration. In one instance, she describes the terrifying scenario of her brother's death, his body being carried by the group, troops pursuing them from behind, people in flight and bombs everywhere. In the next instance she almost mundanely refers to the conversations they had and the food they ate. Listening to

**131** She uses the term *teslîm xakyan-kird* (they gave him to the earth).

her, I felt she took comfort in evoking these final scenes of quotidian family life and mutual assistance before the group fell into the hands of the soldiers and was separated. She continues:

And then we went to Mela Sura and in Mela Sura the *peshmerga* said, »You have to stay here.« But my father said, »You must take my family out of here.« But when we were about to leave Mela Sura, there were soldiers all over the place and they rounded us up. There were soldiers everywhere, and *jash* and planes. They rounded us up and flung three bodies at our feet. They said, »Here, this is what will happen to you. You are all *peshmerga*.« My brothers shouted at them. They said, »We Germyan people, we're like eagles. We don't surrender. We won't give you Kurdistan.« And then the soldiers began to shoot. They joked and said, »Yes, yes, go to your *peshmerga*. Where are your *peshmerga* to help you now?« (...) Then they put us on lorries and took us to Qoratu. When we got off the truck in Qoratu, they took my brother by the neck, like this (she gestures), and dragged him to the office of the person in charge.

They beat him, him and others. My father said, »You have no right to do that.« They said, »What do you mean we don't have the right? They're *peshmerga*.«

They said to my father, »Here, is this your son?« And he said, »Yes that's my son.« And they said, »Your son is a *peshmerga*.« And my father said, »No, he's not a *peshmerga*, he's a farmer.« They said, »Is this your family?« He said, »Yes.« They said, »We're going to put them in jail. They'll have no bread, and nothing«. We were locked into a room for two nights. Then my father went to the soldiers and said, »Look, my family is hungry, let them out of there.« They let us out and we went back to the yard again.

And then they wanted to take us to Topzawa. But one of the *mustashars*, Sheikh Jaff, saw my father. He knew him and said I know this man. He said to the soldiers, »Let him go to his village.« But my father said, »No, I'm here with my family. I'm not going back to the village without my family. I'm not leaving them.«

(...) Then they put us in a car and took us to Topzawa. There were crowds of us, maybe five hundred. ... So we came to Topzawa. When

we came to Topzawa, they yelled at us, they shouted *halhalahs*,<sup>132</sup> they insulted us; they threw stones at us. I mean the Arabs ... Arab women ... they insulted us. The Baath government insulted us, they were violent towards us

We arrived at Topzawa; it was nine o'clock in the evening. It was raining. It was me - I was pregnant - and my father's family: my brother, my mother ... My brother wanted to take bread out of a plastic bag. When he bent down the soldiers came from behind and beat him with cables.

And then they herded the young together. There were more than a thousand young people in the yard and two hundred soldiers. And they beat them. They beat them so badly that at least one of them collapsed with each blow.

And us, they put us into the building. They said to us, »Go over there. Go to that room.« My sister in-law said, »Why should we go to that room? What's going on in there? Look, my sister-in-law« - she meant me - »is going to have a baby.« It was raining. Then somebody called us and said, »daykan-î Enfalakan (Anfal mothers),« come to the windows. And then we saw the men stripped to their underwear, blindfolded and handcuffed, and they put them on trucks two by two. Many of them fell off the trucks. Then they beat them and put them back on the trucks. They took all the young people away in one day and one night. And when they were gone, the whole yard was full of clothes, shoes and watches.

I gave birth to the baby the evening they took the young people away. I had nothing, I tore up my underskirt to swaddle the child. The men were still around then. My husband came to me that night. He said, »Faima, I am not that important, but you have to take care of this child, and not only of this newborn child, don't forget the other children.« He said, »This is the day of the last judgement. I won't see you again.« He said good bye and left. A little later a soldier brought me his identity card (she sends her daughter to fetch her husband's identity card and shows it to us).

**132** *Halhalas* are the typical cries of joy uttered by Arab women, for example, at weddings or other celebrations.

Up to the point of arrival at Topzawa, Faima's account is dominated by memories of her family on the move, their communication as a group and especially of her father's attempt to keep the family together and protect it. The perpetrators were an anonymous force that haunted them. In Topzawa, however, they take centre stage. Faima is separated from her family and suddenly alone. She begins to talk of her individual fate. This is the first time she mentions her pregnancy and the birth of her child.

However, as in Payman's account, her pregnancy and the birth under such terrible and humiliating circumstances is embedded in the account of the young people's deportation and recounted like a peripheral event. The concomitance of witnessing the deportation of the young people, seeing her husband for the last time and giving birth to a child cannot be told except in a distant and unemotional way: »I gave birth to my baby the evening they took the young people away« (Faima, 2002).

In Faima's narrative and those of numerous other Anfal women, Topzawa becomes a synonym for family separation and the realization of the lethal plan behind the Anfal Campaign. Faima remembers someone calling the *Anfal mothers* to the windows, although neither soldiers nor prisoners used this term at that time. In Faima's perception, however, with the separation from their husbands, sons and daughters, the women imprisoned in Topzawa gradually transformed into Anfal women and Anfal mothers.

### *Horror and fear - women in detention*

After the men and the young had been deported from Topzawa, the women were once again subjected to a long journey with various stopovers, which ended at the military camp in Dibs, close to the town of Tuz Khurmatu.

Separated from her husband in Topzawa, Amira and her four children, including a newborn baby, were detained in Dibs, a town located between Mossul and Kirkuk. Around

seven thousand women were detained here during the Anfal Campaign. Compared with Topzawa and Nugra Salman, conditions in Dibs were comparatively »good«. Food and medical services were available.

Amira, who had been separated from her husband in Topzawa, was detained here as well with her four children. She recalls:

We were treated quite well. They didn't beat us and we had food every day. We were not really enclosed, they just put us there in middle of nowhere. The food came in lorries. There were so many of us, hundreds of women and children, all concentrated in one spot under the sky. But it was not a real prison with walls or anything. We were separated from the men. And then they brought us food with lorries every day, and then we saw other lorries that went to a place further away. We could see that there were people, too, that there was something. We kept asking the soldiers, »Are those our relatives?« But they said, »Mind your own business, there is nothing there.« But I think it was them. And they treated us well. They could have killed us. So I think the men are still alive, why else would they have brought them food?« (Amira, 1999)

The assumption that the men were detained in close proximity to the women and the fact that soldiers brought them food would foster Amira's hopes for her husband's return for many years after Anfal (see also Chapter 8).

Despite the availability of a certain amount of food, hundreds of children died of disease and malnourishment in Dibs. Children were wrested away from their mothers and disappeared. Older children were forced to clean the prisons or carry out other tasks for the soldiers and were beaten regularly. Amira (2010) recalls:

I was constantly worried about the children. They kept asking me why their father wasn't coming to see us. I didn't know what to tell them. I was so worried about the baby. I didn't have enough milk for him. The whole time I was afraid he might die. Or that they would take the children away from me.

There was one woman from Qaradagh. She had two children, Shaida and Shaima. One day the soldiers came and took both of them away. They never came back. The woman went mad over it, the poor thing.

Some women have lost three children, some two ... I was always anxious. When the soldiers saw women lamenting and crying over the death of their children, they made the mothers bury them. It was terrible.

### *Nugra Salman - the hell at the end of the world*

Amira stayed in Dibs until the »amnesty« in September 1988. Other women imprisoned with her were at regular intervals packed into sealed buses and taken away. For many, the end of their journey remains unclear to this day. Yet other women were transported from Dibs to the notorious Nugra Salman jail in southern Iraq. This fortress close to the Saudi border was to become a synonym for the Anfal atrocities.

Narrations of women and men who have been imprisoned in Nugra Salman tend to dwell first of all on the seemingly endless and frightening journey to the prison, for which they were packed onto military lorries. They describe their arrival as »the beginning of the end«, using terms like *kota-î alim* (the end of the world), *sahra* (desert) and *jehennim* (hell) to describe Nugra Salman, thereby setting the scene for the forthcoming horrors. Human Rights Watch researchers were told that someone had written »welcome to hell« on the prison entrance; they quote a male survivor of Nugra Salman: »If you know about hell, this is hell; we have seen it« (Human Rights Watch 1993, Chapter 8). Choman Hardi (2011, p. 55) quotes Gurji, who says Nugra Salman was a »hole at the end of the world«.

Twenty-three years after Anfal, Khadija's testimony on her detainment in Nugra Salman was moulded by such pain and anger that she was rarely in a position to talk about specific episodes or individual experiences. She simply repeated:

We went through all that. You see, we were supposed to die in Nugra Salman. It wasn't planned that we return. They took us there to die. But then they changed their minds. We went through all that, one piece of bread and one glass of water a day. They bound women to the window crosses by their hair. (Khadija, 2010).

Faima was deported to Nugra Salman with her six children immediately after separation from her husband and family in Topzawa:

Then we travelled from eleven in the morning until night-time to southern Iraq, to Nugra Salman. Before we reached Nugra Salman, the driver said, »Old mother, you can go and wash. What happens after this will be terrible, you won't see the light anymore« (Faima, 2002).

What followed was detention in overcrowded halls for months, with little food and no sanitation. By September 1988, some hundred prisoners had died of hunger, exhaustion and disease in Nugra Salman, particularly children and the elderly (Human Rights Watch 1993, p. 232). Faima (2002) recalls:

We got a glass of water and a piece of bread every day for a month and ten days. In these first forty days, some of us died every night. Sometimes ten of us, sometimes twelve, sometimes fifty of us. They left the bodies with us for two days and two nights.

Nine years later, in 2011 Faima speaks of Nugra Salman with the same intensity:

It was hell (*jehennim*). We went through hell. I was there with six children. Three of my nephews died in Nugra Salman. We had nothing to eat, a bit of bread and a tomato. Nobody cared about us, nobody helped us. I saw three of my nephews die. When we cried, they grabbed us by the hair and bound us to the window frame (Faima, 2011).

Faima's son, who was seven years old in Nugra Salman, adds an image that has haunted him ever since:

An old woman died. She was lying under a staircase for days. I used to look at her and it took me a while to understand she was dead. She just lay there and nobody seemed to take any notice of her. Nobody cared about her (in: Faima, 2011).

In one of the testimonies broadcast in 1996 on the communist television station, Azadi, a then sixty-year-old woman narrated:

When we arrived there, we didn't know where we were. There was desert, there was nothing. It was very hot. They brought all of us, women and men, into a hall and hosed us down with water. They said to us, »You're going to stay here. This is your future, you will die here.« Many of the women and children cried. The soldiers beat the women who were crying and said, »Stop crying, you gave the *peshmerga* bread and then they fought against us (...).« Four days after we arrived, a woman gave birth to a child. We didn't have anything to cut the umbilical cord with. Then we did it with a stone. And women tore a strip off their clothes to wrap the child in. (...) There was no toilet, no water to wash (...) After a while, the dying among us began and increased from day to day. We told the guards, »Here, some people have died.« And they said, »No, they didn't die, they croaked.« As if they were animals. Then two prisoners always had to pile the bodies onto wheelbarrows, push them out to the desert and bury them somewhere (Azadi 1999).

*»Our children were eaten by black dogs« - grief and guilt*

The death of children in Dibs, in Nugra Salman, and more generally during Anfal is a core theme of many Anfal narrations. Mothers who lost children describe their despair and are haunted by the memories to this day. Other women give central stage to reports on witnessing the pain of mothers going »mad« over the death of their children.

Salima was deported to Nugra Salman with seven children; she was pregnant with her eighth child. She recalls:

The children cried all the time and soldiers kept beating them because they were crying. And then we arrived at Nugra Salman. If I wanted to tell you what happened to us there I'd never finish about how they beat us, tormented us, offended us. I'd never get to the end. We had no food, no water, it was dark, the children were crying. For weeks we had no idea whether it was day or night. Every so often soldiers came in and began to beat us with cables. They just kept beating us until they were tired. The children cried day and night. I can still hear them crying (she puts her hands to her ears). We had no bread for them, no food, nothing (Salima, 2010).

Salima gave birth to a boy in the overcrowded hall in Nugra Salman. She had not enough milk to feed him, and the baby died. She has no memory of whether he lived for weeks or merely days. When she talked about Nugra Salman in 2010, she sat quietly and spoke in a low voice. As soon as she mentioned the death of her baby, her body language changed abruptly. She took up the position of a nursing mother cradling her child. She powerfully acted out the desperation of the moment when she realized the baby was dead. She sat upright and said with such an expression of sheer horror that I froze:

You know, I can't forget that. Every day a child died in our room. One of them died here today (she points sideways and stops) ... then tomorrow one there (she points to a corner of the room and stops), and the next day one over there (she points to another corner) ... (Salima, 2010).

She physically re-enacted the environment of the detention hall in Nugra Salman and was completely absorbed by an image that clearly still haunted her twenty-two years after Anfal. Several minutes later she continued to speak normally. When the interview was over, she seemed relaxed. We had tea together and she joked about her husband's plans to take a second wife. Salima's husband survived Anfal and

was reunited with her after Anfal. The images of Nugra Salman and the death of her baby are engraved in her memory with the cast-iron intensity of the original moment.

Many women report that mothers in Nugra Salman were forbidden to cry when their children died. Several survivors told me the story of a woman who had cried out loud when her child was at the point of death. As punishment she was attached to a window cross and forced to watch the death of her child from there. Women were also denied a proper burial for their dead children. The bodies of dead children were covered indiscriminately with sand in the desert surrounding the prison, leaving the women to witness the bodies of their loved ones being torn apart and eaten by wild dogs at night. Witnesses reported to Human Rights Watch researchers that even the soldiers who guarded the prisoners in Nugra Salman were terrified by this scene, and tried to shoot the dogs and keep them away (Human Rights Watch 1993, p. 235).

The terrifying scene became the collective metaphor for Anfal survivors' suffering. Women repeatedly use the same words to resume the Anfal tragedy: »Our children were eaten by black dogs.« In most accounts the dogs are black. The phrase has become an epitome of the savagery of the Anfal Campaign. It echoes the related horror, but also the women's feelings of guilt and shame about their perceived failure to protect their children. At the moment of their children's death they were neither permitted nor were they themselves able to grieve for their children, whose unburied corpses haunt them to this day.

Hataw lost three children during Anfal. Her seventeen-year-old son was separated from her together with his father in their village. She never saw him again. Her then new-born daughter died on the deportation route:

I had six children with me on the way, three sons, two daughters and a new-born baby, a daughter. What could I do... I had one child here, one here (she shows how she carried one child in each arm). One child died on the way. What could I do, I could

not bury her. It happened near to the village of Kani Qadr. I handed the dead child over to a man; I am sure he buried her.

*Qu.: Have you ever gone to visit the grave?*

No, I don't even know where they buried the child. It was new-born. A new-born baby. Today I have a house and grandchildren. But when one of your children dies in your arms ... this remains in your heart (Hataw, 2012).

Hataw spent seven months in Nugra Salman. Here her four-year-old son died in her arms from hunger and a diarrheal disease that she says was caused by poisoned water given to the detainees by the Iraqi soldiers.

You can forget everything, but not Anfal and the voice of my son, who kept saying he was hungry. I went out to the yard. The soldiers said, »What are you doing here.« I said, »Look here, my child is hungry.« They just sent me back (Hataw, 2012).

Naila could escape the detention, but one of her children died during the flight. Naila's husband had been in political detention in the prison of Abu Ghraib prior to Anfal. He returned home in 1984, and the couple had two more daughters. Naila says, after his detention, her husband wanted to name them Kurdistan and Nishtiman (Kurdish for homeland). When Anfal started, Naila ran away with five children. She remembers:

The small one, Nishtiman, died. It was so cold that day; and she was so afraid. There were airplanes flying low, right above our heads. And then the bombs hit right beside us. And then she died. And when she was dead, I kept her in my arms; I ran and kept her in my arms, I just could not lay her down. I just couldn't (she cries).

Then a man came; I knew him; he was from Kifri. He said to me, »Give me that child; I will bury it. I promise you. Even if Saddam will hang me for it, I will bury it.« And then I gave him the child. He was from Kifri. I think he buried my daughter. But I do not know where.

*Qu.: Have you gone in search of the grave?*

No, I never have. I do not even know where the place could be. (...) You know, when you peel tomatoes and rub them with salt for cooking them, and then you have an open wound in your hand; the pain you feel then, this terrible pain, this is the pain I feel in my heart ever since. Or when you have a splinter in your finger: The pain remains the same as long as the splinter is there. It does not become less (Naila, 2012).

Salima, Hataw and Naila are haunted by the memories of their dying children. Their narrations are full of grief and sorrow. The women try to explain retrospectively, that they, themselves panicking and powerless against their tormentors, had no possibility and no means to help their children. Hataw and Naila try to persuade themselves that the men they met really buried their children. Their narrations thus also reveal a deep sense of remorse and guilt for not having been able to protect their children and not even to bury them and mourn for them. The death of their children deeply shattered the women's self-concepts as caring mothers. The manifold narrations of the children dying during Anfal and eaten by black dogs in Nugra Salman stand as an epitome of the shattered self- and world-concepts of women Anfal survivors.

*»They took our beautiful girls« –  
sexual violence and bodily experiences: shame*

Many women allude in their narrations to the taboo topic of sexual violence and rape during the Anfal period. Their memory of it emerges veiled in metaphors such as »at night they took our beautiful girls« or »it wasn't good for a girl to be beautiful in those days«.

Accounts by women detained in Topwaza refer specifically to soldiers appearing in the detention halls at night to select young girls and take them away. They explain how they used to darken the young women's faces with mud and cover their heads with scarves. The girls sat day and night with

their heads bowed to avoid eye contact with the soldiers. Those who were »selected« disappeared without trace.

In my conversations with Anfal women, I did not come across any first-person testimonies of sexual violence. Other researchers who interviewed women Anfal survivors with a specific focus on sexual violence had the same experience (see Hardi 2011, p. 60). The researcher and women's rights activist Adalat Omer Saleh<sup>133</sup> ascertained at least forty-four cases of rape during Anfal, though none of them was testified by a woman in the first person.

However, hints of sexual violence are found in many of the women's narrations. Payman was terrified of what the soldiers might do to her after her cousin's daughter had escaped from prison. »What if they're violent with me or cut off my head or kill me ... I was terribly scared.« (Payman, 2002). Like many others she uses the word ta'ada, which refers to all manner of violence, including insults, torture and rape. She expresses relief that her cousins' daughter's mother rescued her from prison because »they were violent towards her. She was the same age my daughter is now« (ibid.).

Rumours began to circulate in the 1990s about the deportation during Anfal of women and young girls to Egypt or Kuwait, where they were allegedly sold. Stories spread about Kurds who had served in the Iraqi army during the invasion of Kuwait finding Kurdish women there, now married to Kuwaiti men. A Baath regime document emerged after 2003 stating that eighteen Kurdish girls deported during Anfal had been sold to nightclubs in Egypt. Despite the lack of solid evidence and first-person testimonies, the phrase »they sold our beautiful girls« has become a further emblem of the Anfal crimes.<sup>134</sup>

**133** Personal talk with Adalat Omer Saleh in Erbil, 2011.

**134** An Iraqi military document stating that eighteen Kurdish girls between fourteen and twenty-nine years of age had been captured during Anfal and sent to nightclubs in Egypt was discovered after the fall of the Baath-

Throughout the 1990s, the memory of the sexual violence suffered by Anfal women continued to be veiled and suppressed in their narrations, surfacing only in individual conversations. Indeed, as I will show later, the mere assumption that the women were victims of sexual violence led to their stigmatization (see Chapter 9). Only with the gradual aging of women survivors and the emergence of a women's movement in Kurdistan did memories of sexual violence come to the fore and enter the collective memory (see chapter 15.3).

The same is true of other experiences associated with the body or physicality. Although women talked about being packed on trucks for days and detained in large halls for months without sanitation and privacy, for example, they would never become more concrete. Only in private settings, they would talk about what the lack of sanitation and intimacy meant, e.g. how they had to keep the menstruation blood in their clothes over months. More details are recounted, however, in the many stories about women who gave birth in prison. Here the women go into detail on how mothers and co-prisoners would draw their clothes to cover the labouring women and the new-born babies (Faima, 2002) and how they would search for stones and sharp objects to cut the umbilical cord (Azadi, 1999).<sup>135</sup>

These stories encapsulate and epitomize the whole of the humiliating physical conditions women were subjected to in detention. They are carriers of the whole of the shameful experiences of these women, who had been raised with the taboo of talking about their bodies.

regime. The finding of this document rekindled hope in the Anfal survivors, that these girls and other women who disappeared might still be alive. See »Top secret Iraqi document reveals Kurdish girls sent to harems and night-clubs in Egypt.« *KurdishMedia.com*, 2 July 2003.

**135** See also Hardi, 2011, p. 67-69.

»*Jaysh-u jash hatin*« – the Kurdish collaborators – distrust

The phrase *jaysh-u jash hatin* frequently arises in Anfal women's narrations. *Jaysh*, the Kurdish word for troops, refers to Iraqi soldiers, while *jash* or »little donkeys« is the pejorative designation for Kurdish militia and collaborators. Hence *Jaysh-u jash hatin* stands for joint attacks by Iraqi troops and Kurdish collaborators. Rabea (2002), for instance, uses the phrase *jaysh-u jash hazirbûn* to convey that the troops and the *jash* were already in Qadir Qaram when they arrived.

Many women state in their accounts that Kurds they knew from around the neighbourhoods or even from their extended families came to their villages and pointed out the houses of resistance fighters to Iraqi soldiers. They then actively participated in loading the inhabitants onto trucks and subsequently looted their houses and burned them down. When talking about her memories of Anfal at a meeting in Suhaila's house in 1996, one woman claimed angrily: »I saw no Arabs during Anfal, I only saw Kurds!« (Work protocols 1996).

While the aggression of the Baath regime, as the defined enemy, was anticipated, the active participation of Kurds in the Anfal Campaign was perceived as a particularly dramatic form of betrayal, adding to the women's loss of a sense of orientation. In Payman's narrative, the disorienting impact of being tormented alternately by Kurds and Arabs can be seen well. It also shattered the women's sense of trust in and belonging to their own communities.

There are contrasting memories of the role of the *jash* in narrations of those women – like Habsa – who were helped by *jash* to escape encirclement and detention. Yet while the memory of the collaborator's role and their betrayal was intense and took prominence in individual accounts throughout the 1990s, it was rarely a priority in group meetings or conversations with external visitors. There seemed to be a general awareness that unfolding this memory in its entirety would disseminate mistrust and friction within the Kurdish community and that its content was potentially explosive in a situation of political instability, with the chief aggressor still in

power. It was not until 2003 that the collective narratives in Germany brought the memory of Kurdish betrayal to the fore, as I will show in greater detail later on (see Chapter 15.3).

### 6.3 Shared memories - collective narratives

Listening to the women's stories, it is difficult to distinguish their personal memories from those of others incorporated into their own narratives. Having shared the Anfal experience and the daily hardships in the aftermath for many years, the women have become imbued with each other's memories and narratives. In their narrations, they interweave their own memories with those of their sisters, cousins, neighbours and co-prisoners.

They frequently use identical wording and similar images to describe their experiences. They recall Nugra Salman »hell«, they refer to the image of their husbands, children and siblings »lying under the dust of the desert« and they describe Anfal as »the day of judgement«.

As outlined above, certain memories have become metaphors for the Anfal experience and are expressed in identical wording, such as »our children were eaten by black dogs«.

The memory of the black dogs surfaces also in the narratives of women who were not detained in Nugra Salman. Some of these second-hand descriptions of the gruesome scenario are narrated in such detail and with such an intense expression of horror that they are indistinguishable from first-person testimonies. I once acted as interpreter for Suhaila when she talked to an audience of international NGO workers. Though she had not been in Nugra Salman, she recalled the scene where dogs tore the bodies of dead children apart, and described disturbing details: »The image of an infant's arm in the mouth of a dog is burnt into my brain«, she said.<sup>136</sup> In a conversation about this later on, she

**136** Meeting at medico international, Frankfurt, Germany, April 2009.

said that she saw herself as representing the women concerned and wanted to testify to this devastating experience. During her talk, however, she was completely immersed in this memory and displayed the associated feelings of fear and despair.

The phrase »our children were eaten by black dogs« has become collective memory, an emblem of Anfal, as have the attendant emotions.

It has also become an obligatory memory to be mentioned to external listeners: when Salima told me in an interview about the death of her baby in Nugra Salman, she did not mention the child's burial. One of her relatives came in to the room later on and enquired, »Did you tell her that your child was eaten by black dogs?« after which Salima confirmed, »Yes, it's true, my boy was thrown into the desert and eaten by black dogs« (Salima, 2010).

Numerous other collective emblematic memories emerge in Anfal women's narrations. The story of a mother, for example, whose small child had asked for cucumber up to the very last moment before he died of hunger in her arms. The woman would never touch a cucumber again and would fall into a state of anxiety at a cucumber's smell. I first read this story in an interview conducted by Choman Hardi (2006). Since then I have heard it told many times by other women, albeit the child's age and sex and the mother's name were constantly altered. Common to each story, however, was the emblematic picture of a mother haunted and tormented by the smell of cucumber, an image charged with grief and guilt feelings.

Thus Anfal women construct and transform their individual memories continuously in communication with other members of the group, interweaving their own memories with those of others into one collective narrative of suffering. It is a constant attempt to (re)construct an Anfal narrative that testifies, on the one hand, to the truth of what happened and, on the other hand, is bearable and helps the women to cope. This collective narrative breaks the silence and keeps

it at the same time, granting a certain amount of anonymity and protection to the individual survivor within the group.

It could be argued that this collectively shared narrative is a form of refuge for Anfal women, where they can avoid confrontation with their specific and individual experience, a protection against fully realizing: »This happened to me specifically.« I see it, however, also as their attempt to construct an Anfal narrative that is both tellable and bearable, one that functions as a trauma-protective factor and that helped them to cope in the aftermath, when – as we will see in the following – living conditions and lack of assistance constituted an obstacle to the individual processing of their violent past.

#### **6.4 Summary: Anfal women's subjective truth**

Anfal women's narrations on the Anfal experience itself show the long-lasting destructive impact of extreme violence on their psychological state. They mirror the shock and the fear they experienced during Anfal and their disbelief and disorientation at the sudden and brutal rupture of the course of their lives. Their testimonies are accounts of prolonged grief and reveal perpetual feelings of guilt and shame in the aftermath and the loss of a sense of belonging. They describe how the traumatic Anfal experience freezes in time and continues to dominate their lives and thoughts as survivors. Indelible images of violence and death are etched in the survivors' minds along with the attendant emotions of fear and grief; the intensity of the attendant emotions has remained largely unchanged since the traumatic event.

Anfal women's narrations also demonstrate the fragmenting impact of trauma on their capacity to remember and their constant struggle to reconstruct a tellable narrative of what they had lived through. While recalling unbearable images of atrocities and pain, they create islands of rest and consolation by evoking comforting pictures of family bonds and solidarity or by referring to details of reassuring daily life practices. By

interweaving their own memories with those of others, they construct a shared narrative, which helps them to speak out without at the same time confronting and immersing in the painful individual experience. Thus, their collective trauma narrative has assumed a trauma-protective function.

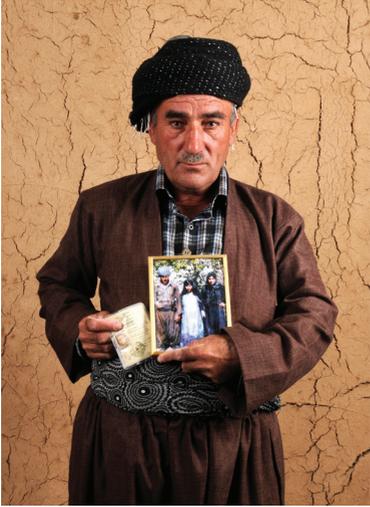
While it is largely agreed that both individual and collective memory are socially constructed and subject to continuous transformation, it is sometimes argued that traumatic memory – frozen in time and beyond narration – carries instead a genuine and unalterable truth. Anfal women's narrations are indeed thick with intrusive and overwhelming images that seem to be frozen in time, such as Suhaila's memory of her last farewell to her husband, Salima's memory of her baby and other children dying in Nugra Salman and Kafia's memory of her burning feet in the bread oven. Today, twenty-five years after Anfal, these memories are recalled with the intensity of yesterday, and have an uncanny and timeless bodily presence. But despite these intrusive, seemingly unchanging pictures, I will show in the following, that the women's individual and collective Anfal memories and narratives have undergone a process of continuous transformation in close correlation with their living conditions and the social responses to their suffering in the aftermath of Anfal.

*Portrait photos of Anfal survivors with mementoes of their disappeared and murdered relatives; photo exhibition to be installed at the Anfal Women Memorial Forum, Rizgary, Kurdistan-Iraq (photographers: Marwan Ahmad Ali, Zana Rasul Mohammed, Dyar Ali Jaf, Sleman Anwar Bajalan, Barham Tayeb Hamah-Ameen, © HAUKARI)*









## **7 Anfal women in the aftermath of Anfal (1988-1991)**

In the following chapters, I explore in detail the social realities that prevailed after Anfal and their impact on and interweavement with the women's memories of and narratives about Anfal, their self-perception and coping strategies.

### **7.1 Life under perpetrator control - fear, distrust and hardship**

In September 1988, the Baath regime announced what was cynically referred to as an »amnesty« for Anfal survivors. On their release from prison, however, the survivors were once again subjected to humiliating bureaucratic procedures; once more they were packed onto trucks and channelled through various police stations, where they were often interrogated before their release papers were signed. Survivors from the Germyan area were accompanied by Iraqi soldiers as far as a small town between Sulaimania and Derbendikhan, where they were ordered to register in one of the collective towns. The last women did not leave Nugra Salman jail until November 1988 (Human Rights Watch, 1993).

Payman's account<sup>137</sup> indicates the turmoil of contrasting emotions: her happiness when her father suddenly appeared to take her from the prison in Samarra; her hope to meet her children again; her presentiment of the tragedy on their

way to Germyan; and finally the grim moment of truth and despair at discovering on arrival in Sumud that her children were dead. Salima describes the surreal character of the arduous journey that followed the amnesty:

People along the road stared at us. We must have looked like ghosts; we were so wretched, as if we were dead, and so dirty we didn't look like human beings. And people didn't know who we were or what we were. Some people rushed over to us and brought bread and water. But others just stared at us without saying anything (Salima, 2010).<sup>138</sup>

Survivors from northern Germyan were obliged to settle in Shoresch camp near Chamchamal; those from southern Germyan were directed to the Sumud camp near Kalar. Some, like Amira, escaped registration and hid with relatives living in Kifri, Kalar or Sulaimania. Most southern Germyan survivors, however, were forced to register in Sumud, where the population rose to approximately 70,000 after Anfal.

The Iraqi government left control of Sumud to Kurdish *mustashar* and *jash*, with Iraqi soldiers making no more than a random appearance. The camp inhabitants were once again confronted with the Baath regime's two-sided policy of provision and punishment. Movements were restricted and controlled, a return to the rural areas was strictly forbidden and job opportunities were few and far between. At the same time, water and electricity were provided, as were free health and educational services. The population was rendered immobile and dependent on the government. Distinctions were made between the various groups. Families who had been deported and »resettled« before Anfal

**138** People in the region of Kirkuk and Chamchamal told me they witnessed the ghostlike transport of Anfal survivors through their towns. A friend of mine, who was in her twenties at the time, told me: »We had heard about Anfal and of course we knew what Saddam had done to the villagers in Germyan and Qaradagh. But when we saw them herded together on the trucks, emaciated and half dead, I began to realize what Anfal really was« (conversation with Rezan, Kirkuk, April 2009).

or had surrendered when it began were given land, loans to build houses with the prospect of future ownership and monthly food rations. Anfal survivors returning from detention camps or hideouts, in contrast, were subjected to strict surveillance and – as »collaborators« – to continuous harassment and arbitrary punishment. They were either given land on the outskirts of the camp, far removed from any form of service, or received no land whatsoever and were thus forced to live in provisional shelters.

They were not registered for food distribution and received food rations at irregular intervals only. Habsa (2010) remembers:

They called us Iranians. They used to make announcements: »All Iranian women have to be ready for food rations tomorrow morning« (...) They gave us a piece of land after the amnesty. We went around Sumud and collected other people's broken stones. We went to empty houses and got some doors or bricks. And then we built a room, one room for seven people in the beginning. Later on there were twenty of us in one room. The house was far away from everything. The government did not provide any water there. So we went to another house. It was empty; it had no doors and no windows. But then the owner of the house came. He sold it and they threw us out. And then we were on the street again.

Only a few weeks after Anfal, Habsa and her sisters had to work hard to survive and feed their children:

We were forbidden to leave the camp in the direction (she points north) of our villages. That was all closed. But the road in that direction (she points south), the asphalt road was open towards Iraq, to the Arab regions. So we worked in Kulajo for the Arabs. We picked tomatoes and eggplants for the Arabs. Sometimes we worked for them for ten days. Sometimes we worked for the *jash*. There was one in Kalar, he had five brothers, we worked for them too. We always went in groups of six or seven women. And two men. We took the men with us so that people wouldn't talk. They didn't work. The Arabs wanted only women to work.

They were cheaper. Women received 5 Dinar a day. They would have had to pay the men 7 Dinar a day ... When the wages were low, we worked slowly ... In those days we did everything. We worked, then we ran around the camp collecting bricks and bits of wood ... we asked other people to give us their broken bricks ... we worked like men (Habsa, 2010).

Thus in the immediate aftermath of Anfal, women survivors, exhausted and disoriented, lived in a permanent state of shock, stress and anxiety, completely dependent on and under the immediate control of the aggressors. Not only were they confronted with the perpetrators on a daily basis, but also with a deeply fragmented camp community steeped in distrust. Absorbed by their daily struggle for survival, they were unable to rest or reflect on their situation. Those who attempted to gain information on the fate of their loved ones were faced with a cynical bureaucracy that saw the deportation and murder of thousands in technical terms and depicted the life in the camps as a modernization campaign.

In 1993, Human Rights Watch published the desperate letter of a Kurdish man from Germyan who had been a soldier in the Iraqi army and a prisoner of war in Iran. When he returned home after his release in 1990, he found his house empty and his wife and three children gone. He respectfully addresses the letter to the »venerable chief and leader, the honourable Saddam Hussein«, his »struggling comrade«, describes his pain about the disappearance of his beloved family and kindly asks for information on their whereabouts. Within two weeks he received a formal and equally polite reply signed by the head of President Saddam Hussein's office, confirming that »your wife and children were lost during the Anfal Campaign that took place in the northern regions in 1988. Yours truly ...« (Human Rights Watch 1993, p. ii). This correspondence has been quoted in almost every publication on Anfal as evidence that the Baath regime implemented the mass murder of more than a hundred thousand civilians as a bureaucratic act.

In 1989, one year after Anfal, Saddam Hussein visited northern Iraq. His visit was filmed, and the images give an unsettling insight into the Baath regime's and Saddam Hussein's personal cynicism:<sup>139</sup> helicopters descend on a sandy strip of land in a small river in the Badinan region, which had been the target of the final stage of Anfal in August 1988. Casually dressed and wearing the familiar slouch hat known from other public appearances, Saddam Hussein disembarks and is immediately surrounded by a crowd of young men clapping and dancing, loudly singing his praises in Arabic (»Our soul, our blood for Saddam Hussein«). Simultaneously hundreds of Kurdish women and men rush towards Saddam Hussein from all directions, many of them breathless from crossing the river knee-deep. A woman with a white headscarf sits on the ground in front of Saddam Hussein and reaches out to him, crying and hiding her face in her hands, then fumbling with a pink nylon bag. He bends down to her; she takes something – most probably the identity card of a missing relative or a petition – from the bag; he reads it, writes a note on it and gives it back to her. Other women are now clinging to his jacket, begging for information or assistance. One woman's headscarf falls to the ground. Saddam Hussein picks it up and helps her cover her hair in a fatherly gesture. He then turns to his followers.

The scene is uncanny. In the midst of clamorous applause for the dictator from his followers, these distraught women earnestly beseech their tormentor, who poses as the caring father. This bizarre *mise en scène* of normality overlays the women's abyssal experiences and transfers them to the realm of the unreal. The women's facial expressions are of pain, incredulity and confusion and give a vague impression of the humiliating and disorienting impact of the encounter, which is in turn indicative of the Baath regime's policy towards Anfal survivors.

**139** The film can be seen on YouTube: Journeyman Pictures [www.youtube.com/watch?v=B\\_S1v2X5qpQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B_S1v2X5qpQ) (last accessed 1 April 2013).

## 7.2 The next nightmare - the Kurdish exodus in 1991

This »uncanny« period ended in spring 1991. In the wake of the US-led invasion to Iraq, the remainder of the Kurdish *peshmerga* units returned from exile in Iran; throughout the Kurdish region, the people rose against the Baath regime. First, the Iraqi forces withdrew; let down by the US-led war coalition, however, the Kurdish insurrection was thoroughly defeated by the Iraqi army. At the end of March 1991, two million Kurds fled in panic over the Turkish and Iranian borders. The world was shocked by television images of an endless stream of people in trucks and cars, on donkeys and on foot, heading for the safety of the borders, of men and women carrying two or three children in their arms and on their backs and of children and the elderly dying of exhaustion along the road.

In the midst of this mass exodus, Anfal survivors relived the panic, fear and horror they had already experienced. Habsa (2010) remembers:

There I was again with my seven children running from our enemy. My father came and loaded us all on a tractor, me, my sisters and all our children. We didn't take anything, we just panicked. I had one blanket for myself and my children, and the bread we had lasted only two days. Later we continued on foot. We didn't look right or left, nobody cared about anybody else at the time. We just tore ahead, with our enemy behind us.

Faima (2011), who fled to Iran on foot, recalls:

I had six small children, one more tired than the other: six children who wanted to be carried or clung to my clothes. I didn't know which one to carry first. It was terrible.

And Suhaila (2011) remembers:

Everybody was just running, nobody listened to anyone else, everyone just ran away. My daughter and I were on foot. She was only three years old at the time. So many children died on the way. Sometimes they died screaming, sometimes silently.

My neighbour was beside us for a while, he was with his son – he was small, maybe seven years old. During the day the boy seemed all right, but then one night they went to sleep and the next morning there was no life in him. He just died during the night without any sign of pain, without a sound ... his father, my neighbour, kept calling him in the morning, trying to wake him. He just couldn't believe he was dead. Then he left him unburied and went on walking. All that was awful.

The Kurdish mass exodus finally brought the Baath regime's massive persecution of the Kurds (and the Shia in the south) to international attention and led to the instalment of no-fly zones and safe havens to enable refugees to return with the help of the US-led coalition and the launching of a UN-coordinated international aid programme for Kurds in northern Iraq.

When I arrived in Kurdistan in December 1991, memories of fear, pain and loss suffered during the exodus were fresh and took prominence in the narratives of many Kurds in Rania, Sulaimania and the surrounding areas. For Anfal survivors in Germyan, however, the exodus was merely one in a series of nightmares. In Anfal women's narrations in the 1990s, the memory of the exodus was rarely touched on unless enquired about specifically.<sup>140</sup>

This was different in the case of Rabea, whose personal tragedy escalated during the exodus. When interviewed in 2002, her Anfal narrative only briefly touches on the very Anfal experience, that is the separation from her husband and her own struggle for survival in various hideouts with six children at her side. About her arrival in Sumud she says:

**140** I only realized in 2010 that in my previous interviews with Anfal women I had never asked any questions about the exodus, nor had I addressed the exodus experience in my previous research or publications, which focused on Anfal women's life conditions after Anfal and throughout the 1990s. At times I even »forgot« to mention it. I had obviously begun to »mirror« Anfal women's perception of Anfal as the »main catastrophe« that overshadowed previous and subsequent episodes of suffering.

The soldiers marked a small plot with sticks. They said, »Here, this is your place now.« And then we went around and collected stones here and there. Some people gave us some bricks, so we built a room (Rabea, 2002).

But then she jumps to 1991 and the events during her flight to Iran:

But shortly after we had to flee to Iran – *rut u qut* (naked and with nothing) – we left. We had nothing to eat on the way. One day I saw some herbs beside the road. I thought of picking some to give to my children. I had a small box with me. I had the idea of boiling the herbs in the box and giving them to my children, so that they would at least have something in their stomachs. But the moment I wanted to pick the herbs, everything exploded in my face (Rabea, 2002).

Rabea stepped on one of the many land mines placed by both Iranian and Iraqi military in the Iran-Iraq border region during the war. The explosion occurred after she had reached the Iranian side of the border.

My face, my hand and my leg were injured. The *pasdaran* (Iranian Revolutionary Guards) came. They asked people around if they knew who this woman was. But I had nobody, there was no man with me. Another man came and said, »We can't treat this woman here, we have to take her to Kermanshah.«<sup>141</sup> I was horrified, I didn't know where my children were, what had happened to them. In Kermanshah they brought me to a house, to a room; there was blood all over, running from my nose and my mouth. I was also unconscious for a while. I wasn't aware of anything. When I woke up again, I was in a hospital and this man, this *agha* (polite form of addressing a man in Iran), was beside my bed. I had lost one eye and all the flesh had fallen off my leg. Then before they brought me to the surgery, I said to the man, »*Agha*,

**141** Kermanshah is the capital of the mostly Kurdish-settled Iranian province of the same name, close to the Iraqi border in western Iran:

if I die you have to take my body to my children.« The man said, »Stop talking like this, nothing will happen to you.« The doctors asked me how this happened. I said, »It was Saddam.« They asked me if I had children. I said, »Yes, I have six children.« They put me onto a bed and put something on my mouth. I don't remember anything after that.

I woke up after surgery and the man was still there. I said, »It hurts.« He brought me a glass of water and some bread and said, »This is for you to recover.« I took two bites, I couldn't eat any more. When I got better the man said, »It's good that you feel better now, I was worried about you and thought what will I tell her children if she dies, what will I tell her relatives?« I stayed in Kermanshah for a month. The man stayed with me all the time in Kermanshah. He left his own wife and children alone to stay with me.

And then I went back to my children. They looked terrible. They had long hair. They were dirty, so dirty. The *pasdaran* had given them some bread and blankets. Then they gave us a tent, and we stayed there for a while. And then they came and said, »Who wants to go back to Iraq?« And we went back, but there was nothing left. Our room had been looted. And then we started to work all over again« (Rabea, 2002).

Rabea's account is an example of how further pain and suffering in the immediate aftermath of Anfal overlaid and merged with the Anfal experience. Her narration leaves the listener with several open questions, e.g. who was the man who helped her? Where were her children during her absence? How was she reunited with them? From the way she addressed the man in her narration, I thought he was Iranian. Only much later in 2012 did she tell me the story more precisely and I learned that the man was himself a Kurdish refugee; he lives today in her neighbourhood and visits her every now and then. In her narration in 2002, she avoided alluding to the terrible pain she must have felt after the mine incident, to her concern for her children, not knowing their fate. Instead she focused on conversations with her saviour. Thus, she transported her experience of pain and

fear quasi indirectly; the comforting story of solidarity covers and protects her from emotions that still linger. Rabea's testimony is another example of a »cover« narrative constructed to convey a traumatic experience, on the one hand, and to avoid being overwhelmed by its unbearable images and emotions, on the other.

## 8 Uncertainty continues - the psychological impact of disappearances

International attention to the Kurdish mass exodus to Turkey and Iran, the UN resolution 688 and the instalment of no-fly zones compelled the Iraqi government to take up negotiations with Kurdish political parties coalesced under the umbrella of the Kurdistan Front. The Iraqi troops subsequently withdrew from the Kurdish heartland, the provinces of Erbil, Dohuk and Sulaimania, but continued to control the oil-rich regions of Kirkuk and Mossul. The Germyan region was divided: most areas came under Kurdish control, including the towns of Kalar and Kifri and the Sumud resettlement camp. Other Germyan villages remained under Iraqi control. The provisional frontline between Kurdish *peshmerga* forces and Iraqi troops, which was not endorsed by any formal agreement or international guarantees, cut through the Germyan region in the immediate vicinity of Sumud. Germyan was not included in the UN no-fly zone.

The Kurdish refugees gradually returned to the Kurdish-controlled areas and the reconstruction of destroyed villages in the areas affected by Anfal began. Families whose male breadwinners had survived returned to their original villages and received help from international organizations. Ironically, in many places the first families to return to their villages were those who had been enrolled with *jash* militia or had surrendered to the Iraqi regime prior to the Anfal Campaign. For large parts of the population of Sumud, however, a return home was not feasible, since their villages were still under the control of the central Iraqi government. The many Anfal

survivors who lost innumerable relatives were still in shock, among them a large number of women with children who had no male support of any kind. While people around them celebrated the Kurdish »liberation«, their personal tragedy had not yet come to an end; their deported relatives were missing without trace.

Negotiations between the Kurdistan Front and the Baath regime failed to provide evidence of the fate of the missing. One of the Baath regime delegates who negotiated with the Kurdistan Front was Ali Hassan al-Majid, the Iraqi commander responsible for the Anfal Campaign and the poison gas attack on Halabja. When Kurdish delegates asked about the whereabouts of 182,000 men and women missing since the Anfal Campaign, he is reported to have replied angrily that this was highly exaggerated since the figure by no means exceeded 100,000 (Human Rights Watch, 1993, p. 345), but he gave no further information on their whereabouts.

A mere handful of men had been able to escape from the Anfal deportation routes and gave eyewitness accounts of the mass execution of deportees by firing squads (see Human Rights Watch 1993, Chapter 9, p. 239-258). Their testimonies and the remains found in some mass gravesites in the Kurdish-controlled area in the 1990s (see Human Rights Watch & Physicians for Human Rights, 1993) proved the mass killing of deportees during Anfal. Yet beyond this, up to Saddam Hussein's demise in 2003 no further information emerged on the individual fate of most of the men, women and children deported during the Anfal Campaign, and the fate of many remains unclear to this day.

When Suhaila, Habsa, Faima, Rabea, Payman, and with them hundreds of other Anfal women returned to Sumud after the exodus in 1991, a period of hoping and waiting began; it would last another twelve years, and for many to the present day. As outlined above, in the 1990s Anfal women in Sumud seemed to me as if frozen in time. In the following I will take recourse to psychological literature from other political and social contexts to outline the specific impact of a person's disappearance on the relatives, the permanent psy-

chological stress and liminal state between past and present characteristic for their situation and then show, how Anfal women share these symptoms.

### 8.1 Literature and experiences from other contexts

The military regimes in Chile and Argentina were the first to make systematic use of forced disappearance on a massive scale as a method of eliminating political opponents in the 1970.<sup>142</sup> A particularly insidious form of state terror, forced disappearance not only annihilates political opponents, but also situates them somewhere beyond life and death, thereby negating their very existence; this has an intensely disorienting and destructuring impact on their relatives and their social environment. Chilean and Argentinian psychologists and psychotherapists have conducted systematic research on the situation of relatives of those who disappeared in the 1970s and 1980s (Becker, 1992, Kordon et al., 1988, Lagos et al., 1994). Similarly, research has been carried out on relatives of the disappeared in Honduras (Quirk & Casco, 1994), Nicaragua (Tully, 1995), Bosnia (Zvizdic & Butollo, 2000) and South Africa (Hamber & Wilson, 2002). Much international attention has been turned to the torments of relatives of those who went missing in the course of the Tsunami catastrophe in Indonesia, Thailand, Sri Lanka and other countries in 2004 (Preitler, 2006). Surprisingly little research has been done on the millions of relatives of missing soldiers and civilians throughout Europe after World War II, e.g., the 1.2 million soldiers and civilians in Germany alone (Meyer, 1981, 1994). Barbara

**142** Two thousand opponents of the Pinochet regime in Chile disappeared between 1973 and 1978 (Becker, 1992), while the military junta in Argentina was responsible for the disappearance of between ten and thirty thousand people from 1976 up to 1983, 95 per cent of whom never returned (Kordon et al., 1998).

Preitler (2006) gives a comprehensive overview of psychotherapeutic approaches to relatives of the disappeared in various cultural and political contexts (including Sri Lanka and Cambodia). Pauline Boss (2006) relates the impact of forced disappearances and those following war and natural disasters – the physical absence but psychological presence of the missing – to the impact of Alzheimer’s disease on the relatives of its sufferers, who are physically present albeit psychologically absent. She introduces the concept of *ambiguous loss* to describe the specific status of presence-absence of missing persons.

Across different political, cultural and social contexts, relatives of missing persons share the specific psychological stress attendant to disappearances. The experience of torture, detention and war or the violent loss of a beloved person ends at some point in time. Although the traumatic impact of such an experience may take years and sometimes a life-time to unfold the termination of an act of aggression or moment of death can be clearly defined. In contrast, relatives of the disappeared do not even know what kind of event they have to cope with. They go through a process of continuous loss with an unforeseeable conclusion. They live in a state of

(...) prolonged shock, a latent and persistent state of crisis, in which suffering and pain, caused by the absence of a beloved person, is experienced unendingly. (...) it is the overwhelming presence of the loss combined with the non-presence of death that torments the families of disappeared persons (Amnesty International 1982, p. 117; the author’s translation from the German).

Enforced disappearance is generally a component of a larger violent context and is related to other instances of violence and extreme situations experienced by the relatives of those who have disappeared. Thus, the realization that one or more relatives have disappeared tends to surface long after the disappearance itself. Indeed, Anfal survivors were first and foremost absorbed by their own experience of violence, by

the fight for survival under the aggressor in the immediate aftermath of Anfal and finally by the ensuing fear, suffering and losses caused by the exodus of 1991. It was not until 1991 that these survivors gradually became aware that their relatives were not coming back. And it took another twelve years, until the fall of the Baath regime, before they received at least certainty about their relatives' deaths.

The enduring uncertainty about the fate of the missing dominates the hearts and minds of their relatives. They live in a state of permanent stress, oscillating between hope and desperation (Meyer, 1981). Their hopes for a return of their loved ones are constantly nourished by rumours about their fate, and triggered by a face or a smell that reminds them of the missing. A Nicaraguan mother of a disappeared relates:

I'm on a bus and I see someone who looks like my son. For a second I am all excited, then I realize that it's not him. I begin to cry. I feel as if I'll never stop (Tully, 1995, p. 1606).

A Bosnian woman whose husband is missing expresses her fear that the uncertainty might never end:

I'd be lost [if I didn't find out the truth]. I hope they'll come out somewhere. Every day it's easier, but really harder. I always think that I'll hear something about them, when I go anywhere I think, I'll meet them. I don't know whether I could survive if I was told, that I'd never know (Amnesty International, 1996, p. 14).

Every loss of a loved one is followed by a grieving process. The psyche undertakes the painful journey through the phases of shock, denial, working through and finally accepting the reality of the loss (see chapter 2). Only with this acceptance can those who grieve begin to disengage from those who are gone, to accept them as a memory and to concentrate on their own lives in the here and now. This grieving process is seen as a crucial step in recovering from traumatic experiences and a precondition for a new sense of vitality and new life plans (Herman, 1992). The relatives of the missing, however, cannot embark on such a process, since there is no reality to accept.

When a person disappears there is no explanation, there are only uncertain and tormenting assumptions that cannot be pinned down. When there is no reality to be faced, everything else becomes unstable and confused. There can be no grief, nothing the person can process, what remains is repeated questions and endless searching (Becker, 1992, p. 85; the author's translation from the German).

The disappeared are present and absent simultaneously, and it is this ambiguity that places their relatives in an »uncanny, liminal space between life and death« (Hamber & Wilson, 2002) and renders the lives of their relatives likewise uncertain and provisional (Becker, 1992).

The relatives of the disappeared are »imprisoned in their memories« (Hamber & Wilson, 2002), »frozen in retrospect and in their pain« (Meyer, 1981, 1994), unable to face the here and now or devote themselves to new prospects in life. Lagos et al. (1994) describe the reluctance of relatives in Argentina to make new life plans, their inability to »(...) make up their minds in the case of vital life projects as long as the situation of the loved one remained undefined«.

Drawing on the notion of *suspension of the future* (German: Hemmung des Zukünftigen), which was introduced by the Argentinean psychoanalyst Castilla del Pino to describe people with depression, David Becker characterizes the state of the family members left behind:

Their attention is turned exclusively to the past (...) The world becomes impoverished, fear of the present and the future emerges, rendering it impossible to make plans for the future (...) There is only one future: the hope that the loved one is still alive and will return (Becker, 1992, p. 86-87).

Despite variations across different cultural and social contexts, death and burial rituals function universally as a socializing process in instances of individual grief. The physical burying of the dead symbolizes the passage from this life into memory, with remembrance institutionalized by the grave. Grieving relatives evolve into a new role in the social

fabric. In addition to the impossibility of going through an inner grieving process, relatives of the disappeared lack the consolation of social burial and mourning rituals and ceremonies related to the death; nor can they go through the customary changes in legal and social status that occur after a loss, e.g. from wife to widow.

Grief cannot be perceived in terms of psychological categories alone. As part of the grieving process, reality provides a framework in which the grieving can modify their relationship to the lost object, in other words process their grief. Two basic conditions are required: 1. the exact circumstances of death must be made known. 2. it must be possible to address the situation with the aid of symbols with a social character (Becker, 1997, p. 40; the author's translation from the German).

All grieving processes contain elements of guilt, since the relationship with the lost person is never completely free of difficulties or ambivalences. Relatives of the disappeared suffer from more complex guilt problems, i.e. a change of location or reorganization of the family is often perceived as a »betrayal« of the missing person, a materializing of their absence or a declaration of their death. Many leave the rooms of the disappeared unchanged and their belongings untouched for years or symbolize their presence by setting a place for them at the table. Women (and men) in new relationships or marriages live with a constant sense of unfaithfulness and the vague feeling that the missing person might one day return.

In the context of state terror and repression in particular, a clearly defined enemy does much to keep the disappeared in a state of limbo »beyond life and death«. Consequently, relatives perceive acceptance of their loved ones' deaths or the unspoken desire for certainty as tantamount to complicity with the aggressor. It is almost impossible to even imagine the agony relatives go through when, after years of uncertainty, they long for a death notice, which they in turn interpret as a victory for the aggressor. Based on their experience with relatives of the disappeared in Argentina, Kordon

et al. (1988, p. 29) criticize approaches that urge relatives of missing persons to accept their death or reach a point of »closure«:

We thought that mourning elaboration - from our patient's point of view - could not take place in direct complicity with genocide. As therapists we understood this was a way of favouring, under the excuse of healing, the identification with the aggressor and the predominance of the individual's most hostile aspects, which would inevitably lead him to experience guilt feelings.

And Suarez-Orozco (1991, quoted from Hamber, 2009, p. 90) describes the reasons why some of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo rejected any form of compensation for the disappearance of their children:

The Mothers argue that any such bureaucratic intervention requires them to psychologically become their children's executioners; they would first need to psychologically kill and bury their children before proceeding with the legal route. And this is too costly, much too guilt-inducing. It is as if giving up hope is betraying their children.

Indeed to this day - four decades after their children's disappearance - a faction of the Mothers from Plaza de Mayo fiercely rejects the representation of their missing children by photos in public memorials as an unacceptable form of closure without knowledge.<sup>143</sup>

Uncertainty has a paralyzing and destructive effect on the internal and external family relations of the missing and their social context. The surviving family members are obliged to reorganize themselves but are plagued by a sense of guilt, when assuming tasks or the role of the missing persons. The idealization of the disappeared can weigh heavily

**143** Discussion with Argentinian colleagues at the Conference »Trauer, Politik, und Erinnerung im Kontext von Kriegen und Regimeverbrechen« (Mourning, Memory and Politics in the Context of Wars and Regime Crimes«) at the University of Constance, 8-10 December 2011.

on individual family members. Wives of missing persons tend to develop a symbiotic relationship with their children, which Becker, drawing on a notion of Adriana Maggi, defines as the »relationship of the compassionate gaze«:

The mother is so overprotective that the child senses it must be ill-fated, marked by the catastrophe. It understands that it will never be able to move around on its own in the world, independent of its mother (Becker, 1992, 89; the author's translation from the German).

Thus a complex entanglement of grief, hope and guilt keeps the relatives of the disappeared »congealed in the past« and prevents them from moving forward in their lives towards new relationships and new prospects.

## **8.2 Anfal women: The uncanny presence/absence of the missing**

### *Haunting questions*

Anfal women share the symptoms of stress and unresolvable grief with relatives of the disappeared in other contexts. Their thinking in the aftermath of Anfal was dominated by lack of certainty about the fate of their deported relatives and the constant thought of what might have happened to them. For more than fifteen years they relived the moment of separation from their husbands and relatives every single day and – given the lack of evidence – do so to this day. They talk about years of listening to the door before going to sleep, of asking the same questions, day in and day out: »What happened to them? Are they dead or alive? How did they die?« Suhaila related in 1999:

Each day I think the day will come, the door will open and he'll come in. How could I not think about it? I think to myself, »Who knows where he is, have they shot him?« I think, »Who knows, maybe he's in prison. What prison could he be in?« I think maybe

he's alive, how could I not think about it? Especially at night ... not a night I don't think about it. Often I can't sleep because I'm thinking about what might have happened to him. Maybe he died of hunger. Maybe he died of disease, maybe they shot him, but maybe he's still alive. And if he is alive, where could he be? How is he living? ... every night, all these questions come over me.

And Runak (1999) said:

(...) It's always on my mind. We don't know if they're alive or not. This is always, always keeping my mind busy. I am always asking them here (she refers to NGO workers she knows) if they know anything, I am always at it.

About her neighbour whose husband was killed because he was a *peshmerga* she says:

Well, my (husband) is Anfal and hers is a martyr. She knows he's dead and it's over. But I don't know if he's alive or dead (...) I think about it so much. I don't know what to do.

Many years later, in 2010, Suhaila said in a meeting:

You know, the martyrs, they died once. We died a thousand times.

### *Oscillating between hope and despair*

Throughout the 1990s, Anfal women fostered the hope that their husbands and relatives might still be alive. They pursued each and every rumour about the detainment of Anfal victims in some remote, secret prison and argued with each other or with themselves. Their desperate search for a sign that would reinforce their hopes was exemplified in the group interview with Seyvan, Fatma and Rezan (Bakery, 2009):

Seyvan: Nobody knows if they're going to come back.

Fatma countered: Saddam killed them, he's an animal.

And again Seyvan: Yes, he's an animal, but he's also a fox. He provides for his future. Maybe he's keeping them as security for

some occasion. If ever he wants something from America, he'll come out with them and release them in return for something. He's a fox, he's farsighted. He may be keeping them for some future plan.

Amira's hope that her husband was still alive was based on the fact that she and her children had not been treated badly in Dibs prison.

(...) We were separated from the men. And then they brought us food with lorries every day, and then we saw other lorries that went to a place further away. We could see that there were people, too, that there was something. We kept asking the soldiers, »Are those our relatives?« But they said, »Mind your own business, there is nothing there.« But I think it was them. And they treated us well. They could have killed us. So I think the men are still alive, why else would they have brought them food? (Amira, 1999).

The women's hopes and fantasies were fed by rumours as well as by events such as the return of prisoners of war years after the Iran-Iraq War had ended and the testimonies of those who escaped the mass executions in the south. Suhaila states in 1999:

I personally met a man who managed to escape. He told me that some were shot and that in the middle of the dust and the shooting, three of them were able to escape. They were three, I don't know who the others were. This one, for example, was injured, but he escaped.

So, there are people who tell these stories and they say maybe some of them will return. Some say they took them abroad. They say the girls were sold to men in Kuwait. Nobody knows anything for sure, but they say that Saddam sent Iraqi girls to Kuwait, I don't know. As long as Saddam is in power, we won't get an answer. Or Ali Hassan al-Majid ... their hands are dirty (...)

And Amira says (1999):

Some prisoners of war came home from Iran after twelve years. Three years ago, one came home to Tuz Khurmatu.<sup>144</sup> He said he had seen people deported during Anfal. First he talked about it openly, but then the government threatened him and now he doesn't talk about it.

Uncertainty also translated into physical stress. Anfal women frequently contacted government offices and local and international institutions for information about the disappeared. Though lacking economic means, they travelled long distances to follow up rumours they had heard and were frequently taken advantage of by people who made false promises in exchange for money. In the interview with Amira in 1999, I mentioned rumours I had heard about a list of some 400 names of Anfal victims allegedly still imprisoned in Kirkuk.

Amira: Oh yes, that list...yes, I know. But the people here do not believe in that list. But I do believe they are still alive.

*Qu: Have you seen the list?*

Amira: Yes, yes, I went to look at it. They said, »There is a man, he has a list, we can look at it.« I went there, yes. Serbest's name was not on the list, or the name of anybody we know. Such lists ... that is all hot air ... everybody tells something ... everybody pretends to know something. But none of them knows anything. But I am convinced they are still alive.

(Her 11-year-old son interjects): And meanwhile they have grown old (Amira, 1999).

### *Presence/absence of the missing*

Although the return of those who had disappeared grew less likely as the years went by, the women continued to wait all through the 1990s up to 2003. The presence of the dis-

**144** Tuz Khurmatu was under the Iraqi government's control until 2003.

appeared in their narratives was uncannily intense in all these years. The women depicted their absent/present husbands as exceptional, shiny figures and imagined their return to be the solution to all their problems. In 1999, Amira related:

At night I dream that he's beside me and that he looks at what the children are doing and worries about them. I dream that so clearly, that he takes care of them. I'm convinced he does. And I hope he'll come back and solve my problems (Amira, 1999).

In 1999, I asked Runak whether she thought about her husband's return and how she imagined it. She laughed:

I'll be delirious with joy. I'll forget all those days of suffering. It will be as if I hadn't had a single day of suffering, hadn't worked for a single day. If God makes him come back ... we'll have a feast, it'll be a big feast. It doesn't matter how long this life of misery goes on ... if only he'll come back (Runak, 1999).

The intensity, with which Anfal women bewailed their missing husbands, does not correlate with the intensity or quality of their marital relations prior to Anfal. The majority of the women had entered into arranged marriages in accordance with traditional marriage bargaining procedures. Many of them hardly knew their husbands or had spent no more than a few weeks, at best months, with them. Yet in their narratives, they idealize them and speak of them in glowing terms.

Sevyan: Just imagine, I was twenty when I got married. I was married twelve days and then Anfal came over us. I tell you I cried for four years that I lost that man. He was beautiful and had green eyes. He was tall and very strong.

*Qu.: You seem to have really loved him.*

(Everybody laughs.)

Fatma: Look, Seyvan, now she thinks you were a loving couple.

Seyvan: Love ... you know, I hardly knew him. My father chose him for me. He wasn't a relative. They agreed on everything and then I saw him. But he was a beautiful man, and very strong. He was a godsend. I'll never find another one like him. I suffered a lot that he disappeared, a man like that ... (Bakery, 1999).

Uncertainty, the presence/absence of their relatives and the pendulum between hope and despair were thus uppermost in the thoughts and lives of Anfal women and became the dominant motif in their narrations and their self-definition in the 1990s. Sidelining the many instances of violence the women had experienced before, during and after Anfal, this kept them in a provisional and ambivalent state of paralysis.

### *Interaction between inner stress and life conditions*

While relatives of disappeared persons in various contexts share a series of specific symptoms of prolonged psychological stress, their coping strategies vary considerably in different socio-political, cultural and economic conditions and are largely shaped by society's response to their suffering and – especially for women – by gender roles, cultural practices and social and political spaces.

The Mothers of Plaza de Mayo in Argentina gave names and faces to their disappeared sons and daughters in political demonstrations and found strength in developing new networks through political action (Kordon et al., 1988; Lagos et al., 1994). Relatives of the disappeared in Zimbabwe and South Africa take recourse to symbolic burial ceremonies and traditional cleansing rituals to appease the wandering ghosts of the unburied dead in order to reach a point of symbolic closure and move on with their lives (Mupinda, 1995; Merk, 2006, 2010).

In the following I show how Anfal women in Iraqi Kurdistan, in contrast, faced a series of social, political and economic constraints and a traditional, patriarchal environment restricting their ability to develop new prospects. Interacting with their inner psychological uncertainty, these social realities prolonged their suffering and held them in a waiting position.

## **9 Anfal women's life situations between 1991 and 2003**

In this chapter I will describe the life circumstances and social realities of Anfal women in Sumud between 1991 and 2003 and show how economic hardship, political instability and a traditional and patriarchal social environment interacted with their above described inner psychological stress and prolonged their suffering.

### **9.1 Social factors - traditional family and gender values**

*Where women belong - patrilineal and patriarchal family organization in Germyan*

The Anfal Campaign in Germyan struck a largely illiterate population in a rural area that was both remote and underserved. As a result of the quasi-war in the province prior to Anfal, Iraqi government services to the area were non-existent (see chapter 5); Anfal further devastated the region's entire socio-economic structure. When the Kurdistan Regional Government took control in 1991, Germyan remained underserved. The Kurdistan Regional Government was weak; the political parties used the scarce resources to consolidate their respective political and military apparatus and to satisfy their urban clientele. There was hardly any investment made in Germyan, which was situated far from the urban centres. International organizations hesitated to work in the region, which was outside the UN no-fly zones and close to the provisional frontline with the Iraqi government. Thus, for years after 1991, the population of Ger-

myan continued to live in extreme poverty without access to health, educational or social services. The illiteracy rate in Germyan was high, particularly among women.

While social and political space for women gradually increased in the urban centres of Kurdistan after 1991, social relations in Germyan are still regulated by a rigorous patriarchal moral code influenced by tribal law and Islamic beliefs (Qania'a, 1979; Qaradaghi, 1995). Women are subordinated to the male members of their family, who restrict and control their movements and social relations.

Families are organized in patrilineal and patrilocal patterns (Barth, 1954, 1958). A woman belongs to a *xawen*, a male protector and breadwinner,<sup>145</sup> to her father or brothers before marriage and henceforth to her husband or male in-laws. Children belong to the father's family; an unmarried woman remains in her father's house. The elderly are taken care of by their sons' families. As a rule, widowers remarry shortly after the deaths of their wives. If not, they keep an unmarried daughter at home to look after them. Girls condemned to a life without marriage or who have not found a husband are referred to as *gawre-kic* (big girls) and are the target of social compassion as well as mockery.

A divorced woman is a rarity in Germyan. Divorcees bear a social stigma, find it difficult to remarry and normally return to their fathers' house, whereas their children remain with the families of their husbands. Polygamy, on the other hand, is widespread, and women often prefer to accept their husbands' second wives than risk divorce.<sup>146</sup>

Widows are not socially blamed; yet their social status is unadvantageous. If a widow has no children, she returns to

**145** The term *xawen* means owner of material goods. *Xawen xanu*, for example, is a houseowner. In relation to a person, *xawen* has the double meaning of »owner« and »protector«, and is most accurately translated as »patron«. Anfal women use it frequently, and in the following I use the original Kurdish term.

**146** One Kurdish term describes a divorced woman as a »broken hand in a noose around the *xawen's* neck« (Qaradaghi, 1995).

her father's house. If she has children, she is likely to stay with her husband's kin, but is often considered an economic burden and tolerated merely for the sake of the children. If, on the other hand, she returns to her father's house, she forfeits access to her children. As a solution to this dilemma, widows are traditionally married (as first or second wives) to a brother of their deceased husband (*levirate marriage*).

I have always been intrigued by how strongly this clearly structured system of »belonging« translates to the relational level: when a daughter leaves her father's house to live with her husband's kin, the emotional relationship with her parents and siblings undergoes an abrupt change. From now on the daughter may sometimes visit her parents, but a mother will rarely visit her daughter in her new home, unless in the context of an »official« family visit. Family benefits are distributed among the sons but not the married daughters. It is the duty of the husbands' kin to look after them. Married daughters have literally gone »out of the house« and in the process altered their family affiliations.

In this relational framework, there is no life concept for a woman without *xawen*. Even in the Iraqi Kurdish urban centres, where women have access to work, education and public life, it is still socially unacceptable for a woman to live an independent life without a male breadwinner and protector at her side. This begins, for example, with the sheer impossibility of renting a house or travelling alone.

Although school attendance was mandatory for girls and boys in Iraq, up until the late 1990s girls in the rural areas of Iraqi Kurdistan attended school for a few years only or not at all. The majority of Germyan women born before 1990 are illiterate. Their future was secured by marriage.

Marriage is a family issue and husbands are selected according to honour criteria and financial circumstances, with marriages frequently arranged between cousins or other members of the extended family. While legally banned by Iraqi and Kurdistan Regional Law, traditional forms of »marriage contracting« persist in rural areas such as Germyan. According to the *jin-be-jin* (woman for woman) agreement,

two male friends give each other their sisters as wives, or two fathers give their daughters in marriage to each other's sons. This eliminates the bride price (*shirbay*) and reinforces the bonds between the two families. In other cases, a family who wants to get a bride for their son from another family promises a girl child to an older man (*gawre be picuk* – old for young) in exchange. Although rarely practised today, in the *jin-be-xwên* (woman for blood) agreement, a woman is traded as a peace offering to a family that has been harmed in some way by a male member of her family. All of these agreements make the contracted marriages interdependent. Unilaterally exiting such contracts affects the other related marriage and leads to major conflicts between the two families.

### *Honour and shame*

Family and social life is regulated by the concept of honour (*ikhlaq* or *sharif* – both Arabic words – or *namus* in Kurdish) and shame that severely restricts women's movements (King, 2008). Family honour primarily depends on men's successful safeguarding of a girl's virginity until marriage and on the decent behaviour of wives, sisters and daughters as the outward expression of family honour. Girls are taught from childhood to respect a complex code of conduct and become familiar with what is considered shameful behaviour. This includes avoiding physical contact with or being alone with men who do not belong to the family, covering the body, not leaving the house without male accompaniment and not laughing, singing or talking loudly in public (see also Fischer-Tahir, 2009). Until recently, female genital mutilation was widespread in several rural areas of Iraqi Kurdistan, including Germyan, and in some instances is still performed. Newer studies confirm that 81.2 per cent of Germyan women are mutilated (WADI, 2010; Human Rights Watch, 2011).

A woman's reputation and consequently that of her family can be damaged by the mere rumour of violation of one of

the rules. Women and girls who fail to comply with the accepted code of behaviour are considered *ayb* (shameless).

Premarital or extramarital relations are severely sanctioned, both socially and legally; adultery is indictable throughout Iraq and punished with up to three years imprisonment. Women accused of adultery and girls caught engaging in premarital relations are *be-ikhlaq*, i.e. dishonourable and a disgrace to the family. They face severe sanctions including so-called honour killing. Male members of the family are under enormous social pressure to punish or even kill them. The women's rights movement that emerged in the 1990s, notably in the urban centres of Iraqi Kurdistan, lobbied successfully for a legal ban on honour killings and violence against women; yet women and men continue to be killed for »reasons of honour« throughout Iraqi Kurdistan, particularly in underserved rural areas such as the Germyan region.

#### *Anfal women in provisional social situations*

The Anfal campaign destroyed the entire economic structure and social fabric of the Germyan region. Hardly any family in the region remained »intact«; even those families who had surrendered before Anfal or who were involved with the *jash* had to deal with losses during Anfal and shared the hardships of the survivors in the aftermath.

Within this disrupted texture, Anfal women had nobody to rely on; their social and legal status was unclear. The lack of certainty about the fate of their *xawen* rendered the women's own social status and family belonging obscure. They were without a male breadwinner and protector, but not widows. They had to defend their missing husbands', fathers', brothers' honour without enjoying their protection and provision. Their husbands' or fathers' »remnant families« were themselves shattered by the suffered violence, impoverished and unable to maintain an additional family member with children.

Women like Kafia or Mahsum, whose entire families were erased during Anfal, were left to fend for themselves alone.

They had no family network or support system to rely on and were obliged to work or beg in order to survive. Also Faima remained all alone soon after Anfal:

It was hell. My father died shortly after our release - of sorrow - and my mother passed away shortly after him. My husband and my three brothers went with Anfal. My husband's brothers were still children then, they couldn't help me, but they didn't bother me either. I was all alone with six children (Faima, 2011).

Other women still had »remnant families«, but could not rely on their support. Parental families, themselves disrupted, gave priority to taking care of their patrilineal kin to the exclusion of their daughters, as in Runak's case. Her brother went missing during Anfal. Her parents, who survived, looked after her brother's wife and children, while Runak herself had to fend for herself and her three children.

*Qu.: Is there no one you can stay with?*

Just my mother-in-law, but she lives in Chamchamal. My father is still alive, but he's looking after my brother's children, who also went with Anfal.

*Qu.: Does he take care of your children, too?*

No, he has my brother's children. My mother is also alive. Both of them take care of my brother's children. They're all in Chamchamal. I'm here, I'm not with them (Runak, 1999).

Habsa's parents survived Anfal, but they were not in a position to take care of Habsa and her two sisters, whose husbands were also missing, and their children. Habsa, Faima and Runak had to work in the aftermath of Anfal to feed their children.

Suhaila lived alone with her daughter close to her brother's house and also had to work to make a living. The same was true for Hataw, who had to bring up five children alone. A distant relative of Rabea's husband helped her in the immediate aftermath of Anfal, but she was left to fend for her and six children after she came to Sumud. One of Payman's brothers looked after her and her only surviving daughter.

I encountered many women who declared that their husbands' kin were not able to care for them or – in many cases – did not even enquire about them. As will be shown later on, this did not prevent them from intervening as soon they saw their honour challenged by a woman's plan to remarry or other allegedly »indecent« behaviour.

Where possible, however, Anfal women stayed with their husband's kin because their children »belonged« to them, albeit the potential for conflict in such constellations was high. Women repeatedly told me that their husbands' kin had rejected or mistreated them, and I personally witnessed situations in which the wife of a disappeared son or brother was mainly perceived as an additional economic burden and a constant reminder of the loss of the missing. Her presence was tolerated solely because her children belonged to the family. If, however, the woman left her in-laws and returned to her father's house, she would lose access to her children. Numerous women were forced to remain with their in-laws as a result of traditional marriage agreements, since exiting these contracts meant risking serious conflict between two extended families.

Amira lived with her four children in the house of her disappeared husband's father and his five brothers. After her father-in-law's death, the brothers found it difficult to support Amira and her children. She survived on donations for the children's school fees from a local humanitarian organization and later on food rations and her pension. She lived in permanent dissension with her husband's brothers over the education of her children. She felt mistreated and disadvantaged compared to the wives of her husband's brothers. Amira was married *jin-be-jin*. Her brother lived in a solid marriage with her husband's sister and had seven children. Had Amira left her husband's family, it would have caused the breakdown of her brother's marriage. So she stayed with her in-laws despite continuous conflict.

Witnessing a quarrel between Amira and her brothers in 1999, I asked her later about the cause:

It's always the same. They want to control me, they keep interfering. I received money for my sons a few days ago and immediately went off to buy them some shirts for school. And there was a huge quarrel when I came home because I hadn't asked P. (the eldest of her husband's brothers) for permission to spend the money. He was furious; he said I was wasting the money. But the children had nothing to wear. They interfere but then don't look after us. My children haven't eaten fruit for weeks, not to mention meat. They have no shoes for school. If it goes on like this I'll have to take them out of school. Then people will say that the grandchildren of Q. have to go begging. They'll see where that leads to ...

*Qu.: Have you ever thought of returning to your parent's house?*

No, I don't want to go to the village. What would I do there? I've been living here for quite a while; the children go to school here. I want them to finish school. I know it will cost money. But Serbest's brothers have to give it to me. It is their responsibility. No, I won't go to the village. You know very well I can't, you know the situation and the consequences that it would have. (Here she refers to the link between her marriage and that of her brother.) But they have to give us the money for my children's schooling. They owe it to my husband, their own brother

*Qu.: But they themselves have very little income. And you received support for your children.*

Yes, but they have enough. You see, they won't tell me how much F. (the brother-in-law who migrated to Europe) sends them from abroad. I'll find out when the new brides (here she refers to the wives of her husband's brothers) talk to the neighbours about it. The new brides get new dresses too, but they make a thing about it when I buy new shirts for my children (...) (Amira, 1999).

Amira's account reveals her sense of frustration, marginalization and bitterness. On the one hand, she remains in the conflictive situation as a result of her traditional marriage agreement and lack of alternatives. On the other hand, she expresses the conviction that her in-laws have a duty to look after her and plays the »children's card« to achieve as much as possible.

Many women talked about their disappointment in their husbands' kin rather cautiously or indirectly. In 1999, Nazanin, the then 18 years old daughter of one of the women working in the bakery project, described instead very clearly her mother's difficult stand:

My father's brothers do not help us at all. They ignore us, as if we did not exist. We spent some time at my father's parents' house with those uncles. But also my father's parents were not good to my mother. They treated her badly. They said to her, »Our son is missing; why are you sitting around here?« Oh you know, my heart aches, when I think of it. Those years at their house were terrible.

*Qu: And they said those things openly to your mother?*

Yes, they said to her, »Our son has gone; so what do you sit around here and live off our money?« You know, what they wanted? They wanted to make my mother angry, so that she would return to her father's house and leave us there ... leave us children with them. But my mother did not agree; she did not do that. (...) She (she refers to the grandmother) wanted to take us children away from my mother. They wanted my mother to return to her father's house, to be with her brothers (...) They kept telling people that my mother wanted to remarry. But that was not true. My mother did not want to marry, my mother just wanted to make our lives better. That is the only hope in her life, that we will have a better life (Nazanin, 1999).

Ultimately, Nazanin's mother lived with five children in a provisional dwelling in an empty hospital building, where internally displaced families from Kirkuk had found refuge.

Women who lived with their father's kin tended to have quarrels with their brothers. The latter were under considerable pressure in their role as *xawen*: They had to provide for the family and safeguard its honour, and at the same time they lacked financial means and social networks to fulfil their tasks. Hence many goaded their sisters into work or remarriage.

Rezan lived with her parents and her unmarried brothers and worked in the bakery project in Kifri. Her missing husband's kin did not enquire about her. Rezan describes the ambivalent role of her brothers, with whom she constantly quarrelled about her children:

*Qu.: Do your children go to school?*

My son does, but they took my daughter out.

*Qu.: Who did?*

My brothers. They don't want her to go to school. They say she doesn't need to learn any longer. They sit at home themselves. They only have one-day jobs now and again. So they want my daughter to sit at home as well. They don't like her wanting to learn things while they sit at home.

(Her mother interrupts:) It's like that here. They always say girls don't need to learn.

*Qu.: Can you read?*

No.

*Qu.: Do you think it's OK that your daughter doesn't go to school?*

No, I wanted her to go to school. Then she could find a better job later on. But it's like that here. What can I do? I can't go against my brothers. They're in charge here. But it's like that everywhere here, that they take girls out of school.

*Qu.: Do they say that girls have to work in the house?*

No, it's not that. There are enough of us here to do the housework. It's ... the girls. They say it's not necessary for them to study. It costs money, the expenses, notebooks, school clothes ...

*Qu.: And your father?*

He's old and ill. He goes to the bazar once a day and leaves everything to my brothers (Rezan, 1999).

Without her mother around, her anger at her brothers was more explicit. Although she earned the money, she was not allowed to spend it on her children's schooling. She claimed her brothers were planning her fourteen-year-old daughter's marriage so she would leave the house soon. She suspected they wanted her daughter and her son to leave so that Rezan could remarry and would no longer be a burden to them. Like

Nazanin's mother, Rezan, however, never considered remarriage as an option:

No, I don't want to, never ever. Why should I marry? I want my children to grow up, that's enough for me. Marry and start everything all over again? I want to see if I can delay this for my daughter, the poor thing. She's still a child. I'll have to agree in the end. They'll have to ask me, though. I want to stay with my children. As long as I have a job it's all right, they can't talk. Work is important to me. Then they can't say I'm living off them. So they have to ask me. But they keep talking about it ... (Rezan, 1999).

### *Remarriage*

Islamic law allows women whose husbands disappear unannounced to remarry after a four-year waiting period.<sup>147</sup> The Kurdistan Regional Government furthermore issued a decree in 1999 specifically encouraging Anfal women to remarry. For the majority of Anfal women I met, however, remarriage was not an option.

The socially accepted levirate marriage was not feasible in the community of Anfal survivors, since no man would marry his brother's wife if the original husband's return was within the realm of possibility.

Most women fiercely rejected any thought of remarriage, referring to the emotional bond with their disappeared husbands and their firm belief in their return, like Seyvan and Runak:

Never ever did I think of remarrying, not for one second. I want my husband back. All of us want our husbands back, we don't want anything else (Seyvan, 1999).

(...) Never, never. As long as I'm in this world I have hopes that he'll come back. I love him (Runak, 1999).

**147** See [http://huquq.com/maghniyah/waiting\\_period.htm](http://huquq.com/maghniyah/waiting_period.htm) (last accessed 1 April 2013).

The idea of remarrying was related to a sense of guilt and »betrayal« towards the missing husband and to the concrete fear that he could come back and find his wife remarried. Suhaila explains the agony of those who remarried.

Some Anfal women did marry again. But they have no peace. They keep thinking what would happen if their first husband returned. What would they do then? And there is a possibility that they might come back (Suhaila, 1999).

The most compelling reason for rejecting remarriage was the fear of losing the children. A new husband would not agree to bring up someone else's children, nor would the family of the disappeared husband allow the children to join a new family. Although the family of a disappeared man might ignore his wife and children, they would intervene without question if the woman planned to remarry and claim the children of their disappeared male relative. Hence remarriage was equivalent to abandoning the children. Hataw (2010) explains:

Never ever did I think about marriage. I had saved five children from Nugra Salman; never ever would I have left them. It was an obligation for me to raise them, to be with them; I did all kinds of work because of them.

The interview with Rezan (1999) sheds light on the dilemma and the social stigma on those women who remarried.

*Qu.: Are there women here who remarried?*

Yes.

*Qu.: And do people talk about it?*

Oh yes, and how they talk about it!

*Qu.: What do they say?*

(Her mother interrupts): What do you think will happen if the husband comes back, how will he see this woman? But some women did leave their children to marry.

Yes, some women left their children to marry.

*Qu.: What do you mean, they »left« their children?*

They gave them to their *xawen*.

(Her mother interrupts again, shouting): Well, my son's children belong to me, don't they?

Just to make it clear: if I were to get married tomorrow, I would give the children to their uncle (her disappeared husband's brother). That's the way it works.

*Qu.: Is there no other solution? Could the new husband not take care of the children?*

No, that doesn't work here. Their father's relatives would not allow that.

*Qu.: Are you not afraid that your husband's brothers might take the children away from you?*

Maybe some day ... but for the moment they accept that we are here with my parents. They're poor themselves, they barely make a living. They're glad they don't have to look after us. I hardly see them. But maybe one day ...

*Qu.: You said that many women hand over their children to their uncles and remarry. What do you think of that?*

What can I say? It's difficult. How can you leave your children? And as well as that, how do we know, they (she refers to the missing) don't come back?«

And Suhaila (1999) relates:

Everyone talks about women who remarry. And if they marry, they take the children away from them.

*Qu.: Who does?*

The husband's family. I know one woman ... they took both children away from her. It's a terrible situation.

*Qu: The Kurdish Government has issued a decree on the remarriage of Anfal women.*

Yes, but that doesn't solve the problem of the children. Look, my daughter is now thirteen years old. I took care of her on my own for twelve years. Nobody in my husband's family ever asked how we were getting on, how she was. But if I got mar-

ried tomorrow, my husband's brother would come and take her away. Lots of women are »sitting«<sup>148</sup> because of that.

Rezan's and Suhaila's statements reveal the interweavement of their hopes for a return of their husbands, their fear of losing their children and the weight of social pressure. The interruptions from Rezan's mother underline the latter's role as defender of the family honour. An Anfal woman who remarries is synonymous with a bad mother who abandons her children and a bad wife who is not prepared to wait for her missing husband and as such violates the honour of both her husband's and her father's kin.

Shirin was one of the few women Anfal survivors I met who openly spoke about her wish to remarry. I interviewed her in 1999; she was a dynamic young woman of twenty-six who worked as a cleaner in a government office in Kalar. Originally from the Dawde region, she was married at the age of fifteen to a much older man by *gawre be picuk* agreement. Her marriage lasted a mere five weeks; then her husband disappeared with Anfal. She herself was detained for eight months in the Dibs detention centre and gave birth to her daughter only days after her release. Her parents survived; on her husband's side, her mother- and sister-in-law were the sole survivors. In the interviews, she talked about her sense of being trapped in a traditional marriage contract, her fear of losing her daughter and the responsibility for her parents and her mother-in-law:

I never saw my husband before marriage. It was a *gawre be picuk* marriage. That means ... My grandfather used to chase women, he was a bad guy (she laughs). He fell in love with a beauty from our neighbouring village when he was an old man. This woman had a brother who was still a boy at the time and I was just born. And in order to get this beauty, my grandfather made an agreement with her family that I would marry the

**148** The term *danishin* (they sit) is here used in a broader sense for the women's paralyzed and hopeless situation.

newborn boy later on if they agreed to give him his sister. This was agreed when I was just born. I was with this man for five weeks – I was fifteen at the time – and then Anfal happened and he disappeared. I myself spent eight months in Dibs. I was pregnant. Eight months later I was released and came to Sumud. My daughter was born just after my arrival. Her name is Hero. (...). Puuuh, I tell you, I thought I wouldn't be able to manage all this. I can't even remember how I got to Sumud. It's like a huge fog« (Shirin, 1999).

Shirin stayed with her mother- and sister-in-law after Anfal and survived by making carpets and handicrafts:

My mother-in-law, the poor thing, has lost two sons, my husband and his brother. I lived with her and worked for a living. My husband also has a sister. But she has married in the meantime and left the house. Last year my father said I should come back and live with them. But when I did, my mother-in-law and my sister-in-law took away my child. I cried for weeks.

*Qu.: Was there nothing you could do about it?*

There was no way they would have agreed to let me take my daughter with me.

*Qu: Legally you have a right to your daughter.*

Yes, but my mother-in-law, the poor thing, I felt sorry for her. She has no one left. I visit my daughter every day. (...) I have to keep two families, my own and my husband's.

*Qu: Would you like to remarry?*

Oh yes, I would. But whom? There are no men around to marry. And first I want my daughter to finish school. Then ... who knows? ... Couldn't you bring us some men from Germany to marry? They say they're handsome (she laughs).

*Qu: If you didn't have to keep your parents and in-laws, what would you like to do?*

I'd like to marry, of course, who wouldn't? It's no life without a man. But what can we do? My grandfather and five weeks of marriage put me in this situation. If you think about it, it's all my grandfather's fault (she laughs).

I do not know if Shirin remarried. Husnia<sup>149</sup> did so in 1993, five years after Anfal. Suhaila (2010) recalls:

Husnia had two daughters. Her husband is Anfal. She really wanted to remarry after Anfal. She talked about it constantly. I remember four different men she thought about marrying. Once she lost her heart to someone who was already married. I said to her at the time, »Husnia, if you do that, if you marry ›on another woman‹ (*le ser jinjeki ktir*), don't come ever again to the women's union. Don't do it, why do you want to make that woman unhappy?« And then she married another man. They have four children and a nice house. But the daughters of her first husband grew up with her husband's brother. They did not talk to her for years. And lots of other people didn't speak to her, even her own sisters.

Thus although legally possible, remarriage was out of the question for the majority of Anfal women due to the emotional bond with their husbands, fear of losing their children and the attendant sanctions and social marginalization. To remarry was to violate the »honour« of the missing husband's kin. A woman unwilling to wait for her husband was considered weak and unseemly.

One of the emblematic stories about Anfal women that run through both Anfal women's narratives and the Kurdish national discourse today is the story of Mariam. Originally from the Qadir Qaram region, she was promised to a man in her village at the age of eighteen. Before they could marry, however, her fiancé disappeared with Anfal. Thereafter she lived with her parents in Sumud and awaited his return. She died in 2009 at the age of thirty-nine; her mother donated her wedding dress to a memorial site in Sulaimania, a dress she had stored away for twenty-one years. Homage is paid to Mariam there as a symbol of Anfal women's and the Kurdish nation's suffering.

In the shadow of this normative picture, which idealizes the »pure, waiting woman«, the reality for countless women

149 The name has been changed.

in similar situations was less poetic. I will cite the protocol of a team of local social workers who visited Anfal women in remote villages in Bnari Gil/Dawde in 1997/1998.<sup>150</sup> I received the protocol in English and have made no changes to the wording:

Village of Duragi: The owner of the problem's name is A: She is widow, but still girl, was born in 1959. Three months before the disaster of the anfalization she had married in the way of (woman by woman) for one of her brothers, but because the situation in Kurdistan was not normal because of the wars they postponed their marriage to a proper time. Unfortunately the suitor of A. anfalized at the time of the anfalization, after a period of time her brother engaged with his fiancée who was the sister of A's anfalized suitor. Now they are having two children. During these ten years A. is waiting for her suitor to return, she is staying with her old parents, no one knows what will happen to her if they die. What is surprising us is that no one pays attention to her, they look at her as if she is a toy, its owner has died, therefore it must die too. If she was the fortune of the anfalized person, they immediately divide it among them. But A. is a human being, she has feeling like anyone else, that is why her relative must take something into their consideration that in the case of her suitor returned no one can be sure whether he would accept A. as a wife or not, though there is no hope for them to return.

Law and the scientists of religion do not have any opinion about such a matter, while A and thousands of women and girls are reaching the solution that they must think about their future because Law and all the religious documents put four years and four months for a woman to stay after her husband, otherwise they must go to court. This is our law, the law of Islam.

**150** The visits took place within a rural rehabilitation programme funded and coordinated by Norwegian People's Aid (NPA). The protocols were translated by the social workers themselves; I thank NPA for giving me access.

The solution:

- A. Must forget about her problem by working or will share in the project of preventing illiteracy
- speaking with her father in order to give her freedom to think about her future

The protocol is a disturbing document of the hopelessness of A.'s fate, but also of the helplessness of the social workers concerned, who suggested she should »distract« herself by work or literacy courses and ultimately advocate for marriage as the sole solution.

While remarriage by Anfal women was socially sanctioned, it was perceived differently in the case of male survivors. Mam Khalil's wife and six children died in Nugra Salman jail; he returned to Sumud alone. Four years later he remarried; his wife was a *peshmerga's* widow and brought five children into the marriage. Mam Khalil says that he took care of them. The couple had another two daughters after Anfal. Like Mam Khalil, many male Anfal survivors remarried several years after the atrocity. If the children of a first marriage survived, they were brought into the second marriage to be looked after by the new wives. I cannot remember hearing people censure Anfal men who remarried; it was taken for granted that a single man needed a wife to look after him, especially if he had children. In addition, the possible return of the first wife seemed less haunting, since a man who lived with two wives met with social approval. On the other hand, remarriage was not without its challenges for the male survivors of Anfal. There was little room in the »new« family for mourning or remembering loved ones from the family lost in Anfal. When I interviewed several older men survivors in 2010, I was shattered by the emotional intensity with which memories broke out of them in the interview situation, showing that - in contrast to Anfal women - they had had little occasion to speak about their experiences and exchange memories with other survivors.

## 9.2 The economic circumstances - poverty, work and social control

Prior to the Anfal Campaign, the people of Germyan lived from agriculture and livestock farming. The organization of agricultural activities was family-based; women both worked in the agricultural fields and had responsibility for the children and the household.

After Anfal, a number of women whose husbands' or father's kin took care of returned to their original villages. They received building material and starting packages for agricultural production from international aid organizations and contributed to the family income, while a male *xawen* provided them with protection and manpower.

Also a number of women with adolescent sons went back to the villages; while they worked in the fields, their sons handled agricultural machinery and looked after the transportation and merchandising of agricultural products. Faima was one of these women. In 1992 she returned to her home village, along with her six children, two of whom were adolescent. Unable to make a living there, she eventually returned to Sumud in 1999, after her oldest son had died in a tragic accident, a loss that features in her narrations today as yet another link in a chain of tragic events that had marked her life.

I met some women who wished to return to their villages, but had no access to their missing husbands' land, because their in-laws had already staked their claim. Within the context of the reconstruction projects, we provided Anfal women with legal aid to reclaim their portion of the property. Most of them, however, withdrew their claims rather than file a lawsuit against their in-laws. In this case, winning a legal battle would have been tantamount to social marginalization.

This dilemma left countless women Anfal survivors with no option but to remain in Sumud, where circumstances continued to deteriorate throughout the 1990s. As described already, with the return of many families to their original

villages and the lack of investments in its infrastructure, Sumud metamorphosed step by step into a ghostly landscape with damaged water points and here and there a scattering of houses, inhabited in the mid-1990s only by families whose home villages were still under Iraqi control and by Anfal women without male support. In 1993, the number of female-headed households in Sumud was approximately one thousand.

When I started to work in Sumud, I was unable to comprehend how these women managed to survive. The response to my question of what they lived on was invariably »on nothing« or »on pittances«. This must be seen, however, in the context of the women expecting help from me as an aid worker. Over time I gradually gained insight into the multiple survival strategies of Anfal women in Sumud.

Women like Mahsum and Kafia, who had lost their entire families, were indeed reduced to surviving on pittances and the sporadic assistance of their neighbours. Mahsum had lost her right arm in a bomb attack that took place before the Anfal Campaign and was unable to work. Throughout the 1990s, she lived in a tiny one-room house in Sumud, whose walls were blackened with soot. The sole items in the house were two mattresses and a kerosene-fuelled heater, which was also used for cooking. She spent her time wandering from house to house in Sumud, here and there managing to procure food and cigarettes. Despite her abysmal circumstances, she remained a spirited, outspoken woman who participated in public meetings and put across her demands for justice and assistance. She died in conditions of extreme poverty in the year 2000, alone. Her neighbours told me that in recent months they had found her immobile in her house on a number of occasions and given her some bread.<sup>151</sup>

**151** A large number of elderly male Anfal survivors were also destitute. I met one man who was about sixty years old during Anfal and had lost his wife and two sons. He lived with his unmarried daughter in Sumud. She claimed he had not spoken a single word since Anfal. He never left the

Some Anfal women with children sent the latter out to work. Runak, for instance, removed her sons from school when they were ten and thirteen years old. They sold cigarettes and chewing gum close to the main roads and earned a living for the whole family.

Others, like Amira, whose children were at school, received monthly child support from local organizations such as Kurdistan Save the Children or international child sponsorship programmes. These donations enabled the whole family to survive for several weeks.<sup>152</sup>

Other income opportunities came from international aid programmes. The United Nations World Food Programme distributed food rations throughout Iraq, although this activity was suspended on numerous occasions due to local conflicts. Anfal survivors habitually sold part of their rations at the market to generate a small income. Sporadically, international organizations launched micro-credit-projects or distributed livestock meant as starting point for setting up some long-term activity. Anfal women, however, constantly upset the aid workers' applecart by immediately selling the animals in order to stay alive for another few months. I met several women who were experts in this survival strategy. They were experts in knowing the different aid programmes, and the criteria to benefit from their resources. I met a woman in the Qaradagh region who had three identity cards: one proved she was a Kirkuk refugee, a second revealed she was an Anfal survivor, while the third made her the widow of a *peshmerga* fighter. Equipped with multiple identities, she fit the profile of several aid programmes and thus managed to survive.

house but lay motionless on his mattress. It remains a mystery to me how these two people could have survived.

**152** Child-sponsorship programmes are popular in Europe and the US, as they conjure up the illusion of genuine relationships between the donors and the benefitted children. In practice, however, the often arbitrary selection of such privileged godchildren fosters competition and conflict in communities where every child is needy.

Most Anfal women, however, were obliged to work. Illiterate and lacking professional skills of any kind, their options were confined to handicrafts and agricultural work. Shirin sold handmade carpets to support her daughter, her mother-in-law and her own parents. Suhaila received a sewing machine from an international organization and earned a small income making suits and dresses for Kurdish customers.

Runak worked in a sewing project set up by the PUK women's union. However, most attempts by local and international aid organizations to set up sewing, carpet-weaving and other handicraft cooperatives to support Anfal survivors failed dismally. In Anfal-affected areas there was no demand for comparatively expensive handicraft products, which faced competition from the substantially cheaper imported goods on the urban markets. More promising income-generating projects such as mud brick production for village reconstruction or food-processing factories shared a similar fate, since Anfal women were incapable of long periods of hard physical work. Besides, family-based groups with a male labour force soon copied these projects, producing at lower cost. The only durable income-generating project for Anfal women I know of in the Germyan region is a bakery project in the small town of Kifri near Sumud, which was set up by the Japanese-based aid organization Peace Winds in the late 1990s. Here, as many as twelve Anfal women, some of whom were my interviewees, made a living for several years baking and selling bread.

Hataw, Rabea, Habsa and her sisters, and like them many other Anfal women who had several children to look after, turned to agricultural day labour. During the harvest periods, they assembled in groups in the early morning and sat along the main Kalar-Kifri road waiting for farmers to come along and select them for seasonal work. Sometimes they sat there for hours. A one-day job brought around 20 Iraqi Dinar, the equivalent of a kilo of rice in 1999. Some women worked for Arab families across the Kurdish/Iraqi frontline on a daily basis. Others walked for hours, sometimes for days, to the

mountainous regions, returning with huge bundles of firewood, which they sold at the market in Sumud.

As in the 1990s, the military line between Kurdish *pesh-merga* forces and the Iraqi army lay close to Sumud, quite a number of women Anfal survivors engaged in smuggling activities across the frontline. As women, they frequently succeeded in passing Iraqi checkpoints, eventually returning to the Kurdish side with barrels of petrol, washing powder or food, which they then sold. While the income gained from smuggling was negligible, the risk involved was high. Numerous women were arrested by Iraqi soldiers and subsequently humiliated and beaten. Rumours about women raped by Iraqi soldiers or by Arab landowners spread through the region.

Young men in Germyan were also engaged in smuggling. They would meet at night near Kifri and strip old Russian military vehicles of superfluous material until nothing but the shell remained. In convoys of twenty or thirty vehicles they then crossed the Iraqi frontline. Night after night, Iraqi soldiers shot at them, and not a week went by without the loss of several lives, the bitter consequence of a dangerous operation. I know several families who not only lost sons and other relatives to Anfal, but also their surviving sons to smuggling activities. Haji Ibrahim lost his first wife, two daughters and two sons during Anfal; another of his sons died on the smuggling route in the 1990s. Today, fusing these losses in his narratives to a single nightmare, Haji Ibrahim refers to all of his children as Anfal victims (Ibrahim, 2010).

### *Economic changes after 1998*

The adoption of UN Resolution No. 986 in 1998, the so called Oil-for-Food Agreement, altered the economic landscape in Iraq and the Kurdish region. As a result, every single family in Iraq and in the Kurdish administered areas received monthly food rations. Not only did the food rations guarantee survival, the surplus sold at the market yielded a small family income.

The Kurdistan Regional Government finally granted pensions to Anfal women in 1999. At some 300,000 Iraqi Dinar, they were smaller than the *peshmerga* widows' pensions and less than adequate for the basic needs of the women concerned.

This notwithstanding, regular food rations, the prospect of a pension, and grown-up sons combined to encourage more Anfal women to return to their home villages. In 1999, the number of female-headed households left in Sumud had dropped to approximately four hundred.

### *Work and social control*

Economic hardship and lack of income opportunities hit male and female Anfal survivors alike. For the latter, however, the struggle for survival was a relentless ordeal. Women were confronted with hitherto unknown forms of wage labour. They battled with traditional moral values and social expectations that they safeguard the honour of their disappeared husbands, brothers, fathers and sons, on the one hand, and the need to engage in precarious day labour or dangerous smuggling activities for their own survival and that of their children, on the other. Waiting at the side of the road for farmers to pick them up, getting into cars with men not their kin, moving around unaccompanied by a male member of the family – all of these activities constituted an intense violation of their own sense of honour and shame. I have a lasting memory of the moments when I passed these groups waiting on the main road from Kifri to Kalar whenever I arrived to Sumud at early morning time. Between fifteen and thirty women sitting in silence, their heads bowed, their faces covered with scarves as soon as a car passed – an embodiment of suffering, shame and anguish.

Apart from having to struggle daily for survival and contend with their own ambiguous feelings, they faced the disapproval and suspicion of their extended families and their neighbours. As »women without men«, they were subject

to particularly strict social control and lacked the protection of male relatives in the face of moral accusations and defamation.

When women worked in the fields or crossed the Iraqi frontline to smuggle, they were quickly suspected of dishonourable behaviour. When they were beaten or humiliated by Iraqi soldiers, the community blamed them rather than the soldiers. I personally heard countless remarks about working Anfal women, including »who knows what they're really up to when they say they're going to get tomatoes«. In the 1990s, I asked a number of men in Germyan what they thought of women who worked. They explained that these women were »a problem« because they had no *xawen* and went out to work instead. They also saw them as a bad example for their own wives and daughters.

Rezan and Fatma, themselves working in the protected space of the bakery project in Kifri, describe the other women's ordeal:

Rezan: (...) women worked at the checkpoints too, poor things. That was terrible. They used to get beaten by the soldiers. Sometimes they smuggled petrol, and when the soldiers found the petrol, they used to pour it over them and set them on fire - the poor things. Some of them died. And then people here used to talk about them. They said, »They went to the soldiers and did dirty things.« But there was no other work; all you could do was sit at home.

Fatma: The women who worked at the checkpoint, they were really poor. Now the checkpoint is closed, but lots of them used to work there. They bought things in Baghdad and then brought them here, sometimes officially, sometimes smuggling. People say all sorts of things about them, what they did in Baghdad. (She lowers her voice) ... some of them were pregnant. Some committed suicide. They were beaten by the soldiers at the checkpoint ... and burnt. That was all very squalid and dirty. Or those who did day labour. ... They used to sit on the street corner in Kalar early in the morning and wait until someone called them for work. But this sitting at the corner ... people were always

talking about it; they said, »They get in cars and go, who knows where; yes, yes, they say they go for tomatoes but who knows« ... and so on ... Oh God, that was all terrible work, no life (Bakery, 1999).

Even those rare women who were fortunate enough to have what was considered a »decent« job in offices or projects run by international organizations describe the permanent pressure to justify their work and their movements.

Runak worked in a sewing workshop set up by the PUK women's organization:

*Qu.: Runak, you leave the house every morning, you take the bus to work, you leave your children on their own. Do your neighbours talk about you?*

Oh, you know, I watch out, I'm proper. But yes, when a car comes to pick me up, for example, I won't get in unless there are several people in it already, or a neighbour or a relative. I can't just get into a car and go to work. I'm afraid of what people might say. I'm really too old for that sort of thing but all the same I'm still afraid of people talking.

*Qu.: And do they talk?*

Oh yes, they certainly do.

*Qu.: And what do they say?*

Oh, they say, »She went off by car. Who knows where she went, who she's going to meet.« It's definitely a worry. I always think, now I'm going and they'll be saying, »Where is she going, to whom ...« But since I don't have anyone to support me, I have to go out anyway. What else can I do? It's not just a year; I've been in this situation for seven years now.

*Qu.: Do you know any women who have had serious trouble because of rumours about them?*

Oh yes, and how! If you go out they say, »Where's she going, where does she work, what is she doing?« Some women are beaten and tormented by their *xawen*. But they have to go out, they've no alternative. How are they going to feed their children if they just sit around at home? They need food, clothes. It all costs money. So they have to do something. They'll do any kind

of work, they'll do business, help strangers put sacks into their cars. There are women who have no one. They have to go out and work (Runak, 1999).

And Shirin (1999) who at the time worked with an international NGO:

Look, if I were to go to Kalar now with the driver who brought you here they would all say, »She was alone in the car with that man for ten minutes.« That's a problem. If you listen to what people say you can't do anything, you can't work. That's the way it is. You simply cannot listen to them. You have to work anyway. Not everybody talks. The old people say *aybe* (it's shameless). But there are also others who now see things differently. They say men, women, what does it matter ... that it's not *ayb*.

Rezan worked hard to convince her brothers and get permission to participate in the bakery project:

*Qu: Why were your brothers against it at first?*

They said, »You have to leave the house at night and then people will talk. You don't have to work.« But then they realized it was good that I was earning. And we're all together there. We also made sure that a car came to pick us up. We can't walk the streets at night.

*Qu.: And did people talk?*

Oh yes, especially in the beginning, because we used to leave our houses at night.

Seyvan confirms: Oh yes, there was a lot of talk about us, especially since we worked at night. For many people that was unheard of. But if we listened to them ... we just can't listen to them. We can't just sit there. We have to earn something. And this is better than a lot of other things (Bakery, 1999).

The interviews show, on the one hand, that the women felt resentful and indignant at the suspicious attitude of their own community. They indicate, on the other hand, how the women were bound to reject and ignore the attacks against them in order to survive. However, Runak's reference to her own »purity« and innocence (»I am proper« and later

»I'm really too old for that sort of thing«) reveals how she has to defend her work in the face of own internalized moral standards. Fatma and Seyvan, though full of compassion for women working at the checkpoints, emphasize the respectability of their own workplace in comparison with day labour and smuggling.

### *Sexual violence and prostitution – a double stigma*

Anfal women who worked lived in permanent stress and constant fear of social stigmatization. The ubiquitous social control they were subjected to was clearly a double standard: without male protectors and providers, women were considered »women at risk« and allegedly easy prey to sexual violence at work, at Iraqi checkpoints and in daily interaction. At the same time, the women found themselves blamed for the violence they suffered. Ultimately, no distinction was made between their sexual exploitation in relationships, their position as victims of sexual violence and the allegation that they were prostitutes. It was extremely difficult in the 1990s to uncover details of sexual violence and prostitution among Anfal women in Germyan. Similar to other topics associated with sexuality and the body, they were strictly taboo. Even in more intimate conversations with Anfal women, they were merely hinted at or disguised in metaphors.

Fatma (1999) commented on women working at the checkpoints: »Some were pregnant, some committed suicide«; it remains unclear whether they were raped by Iraqi soldiers or had prostituted themselves for survival. And Suhaila (1999) gave an indirect answer to my question whether men had exploited their situation: »Oh yes, there are so many. And then they don't marry them. They are not sincere with the women.«

Beyan,<sup>153</sup> a young physician who practised in Germyan in the early 1990s, once told me she had treated twenty-seven

**153** The name has been changed. I met Beyan in Sulaymaniah in 1999.

Anfal women with unwanted pregnancies in the course of two years. It remained unclear whether the women had been raped or had had sexual relations with men who had no intention of marrying them. Nor could Beyan say what happened to them after they had visited her.

Nonetheless, beyond facts or evidence, it was the women who ultimately had to bear the shame and face the consequences.

Habsa told me the story of H., a woman who worked with her in the tomato and eggplant field in the Kulajo region and brought her adolescent daughter with her to work.

One day the landowner who employed us put something in the girl's food to make her sleep and took her to his house. When the girl woke up she was terrified but had no idea what had happened in the house. She told the story right away, however, and an investigation followed. And the man denied doing anything to the girl. Then she was examined and they found that she was in fact still a virgin. So nothing had happened. But after that people talked so much about her and her mother that they had to leave the region. They moved to somewhere else (Habsa, 2010).

### *Sanctions*

Hints and rumours about women being punished by their male relatives for »dishonourable« behaviour ran through the Germyan region in the 1990s. When I asked Runak (1999) whether she knew of any women who had gotten into serious trouble as a result of people speaking badly of them, she replied, »(...) Some women are then tormented and beaten by their *xawen*«.

A social worker employed with an international organization told me about her meeting with a fourteen-year-old girl whose father disappeared during Anfal. She was now living with her father's brothers. When her uncles left the room during a visit, the girl burst into tears saying, »My mother was killed during that time when we didn't even have a piece of dry bread to eat«. Habsa (2010) told me the story of N.:

N. was detained in Nugra Salman during Anfal. She was beaten so badly by the soldiers that she lost her child – she was pregnant when she was captured – and her womb had slipped out of place. Her belly was swollen like this (she gestures an inflated belly) and very big. The woman had two daughters and three sons, her husband was Anfal. After Anfal she was often with men. She liked laughing and joking with the *peshmerga* and they gave her money. We used to tell her not to do that, not to joke so much with men; that was bad for her. But she was like that, she liked fun. Then her cousin came to visit her. He saw her belly but knew nothing about her injuries or that her belly was so big because of Nugra Salman. He said she was pregnant and shot her and buried her in the sand outside Kalar. The dogs ate her dead body. Communist TV filmed her body and showed it on television. The man was arrested but later he was pardoned and released. Now he's in prison for other things, for fraud and that sort of thing.

Stories like this rarely surfaced in the 1990s. When Habsa told me this story in 2010, she drew a sinister parallel between children's dead bodies in Nugra Salman and the woman's corpse ten years later, all of which had been »eaten by dogs«. She constructed the story of the woman shot by her brother as a metaphor for the tragic fate of Anfal women, who had been persecuted by the perpetrators of Anfal and then punished by their own relatives as they struggled to survive in the aftermath.

Hence Anfal women were perpetually torn between the obligation to work to earn a living and adherence to traditional moral codes and gender roles. Gulnaz Aziz Qadir, who worked at a counselling centre for Anfal women in Sumud in the 1990s, commented in 2000:

After more than ten years work with Anfal women I can say that they have three problems: firstly, they are waiting; secondly, they cannot make their own decisions, and thirdly, their lack of financial means condemns them to a daily fight for survival. For all these years after Anfal they have had to earn money and were unable to think of themselves. It is only now that they're getting

a pension, that they can take things easier and begin to think about their own psychological and social situation. (...) Whether you like it or not, these women grew up in our patriarchal and agricultural society. Before Anfal, it was prohibited for women to appear in public, prohibited for them to see a man outside their family, a guest for example. After Anfal, women had to take on all the responsibility. On the one hand, the rules and moral codes of our society bear down on them. On the other hand, they have to care for their families' survival. They get ground between these two millstones. For women, this is a completely new situation in our history (Gulnaz, 2000).

*»We sit and wait« - social expectations*

Due to the enormous pressure on women who went out to work, work had an exclusively negative connotation in the women's perception. The women themselves never saw work as a desirable option, as a means of spending time with others and gaining new experience.

I always enjoyed visiting the bakery project in Kifri. The Anfal women employed here seemed to relish the work, they talked and laughed when they were baking and spent their break together sitting under trees in the courtyard. But in their interviews these positive aspects were not mentioned. Even Rezan, who hinted that her income had strengthened her position with her brothers, seemed to perceive the work as pure necessity:

*Qu.: Do you like the work?*

What can I do?. The main thing is that I have a job. There's no work here. Even for men ... Work is fine for me as long as we get paid ... I work here for the money. It would be better to sit at home, but the expense ... for the children ...

*Qu: And do you sometimes enjoy the work? You're in a group and work together, so you get out of the house occasionally.*

Yes, sometimes we laugh a lot, we're all in the same situation. But I work for the money, I wouldn't be working otherwise (Rezan, 1999).

Runak also worked with a large group of women and participated in work-related social events. She, too, commented:

My eldest son is now twenty-five. If he could find a job, I'd stay at home and rest. I wouldn't have to work (Runak, 1999).

### *Women in grief - immobility*

Women also faced pressure and social control outside the work context. In his description of traditional life in Kurdish rural areas, Burhan Qani'a (1979) mentions three occasions on which rural women participate in public life: weddings, funerals and family excursions. Prior to Anfal, the social lives of women and girls in the rural areas mostly took place at home, with their extended families and in their immediate neighbourhood. Hospitality was of great importance. Talking about her life in Germik before Anfal, Mahsum stated:

We used to have a full house - my daughters and I would cook huge pots of rice with ... on the open fire ... We did everything outside ... And if we had nothing to do, we met at the water points and had a chat. The water point - that was our post office (Work protocols, 1996).

Anfal destroyed rural village structures and consequently the social life of the Germyan people. Poverty and the daily struggle for survival left little room for hospitality. Anfal women met in the evenings in front of their houses. However, their exchange centred on their suffering, hardships and losses. The shadow of Anfal hung over every conversation, every marriage and every birth. Photographs of the disappeared were displayed on the walls of every living room; in every conversation someone was bound to say *shwênyan dyara* (literally: their place can be seen), i.e. they are missing and we are missing them.

Anfal had left an indelible imprint on the landscape – both in the camp of Sumud and the nearby towns of Kifri and Kalar. Parks, recreation centres, football fields, cinemas and picnic spots were non-existent. Hospitality and family outings were thwarted by economic hardship. In this context, women survivors found their movements confined in the extreme. They visited each other, but unlike the villages, the roads in Sumud were not protected areas. Once women left the house, they had to take care not to provoke their neighbours' disapproval. Expected to act in the manner of grieving wives, they were subject to intense social control by the inhabitants of the neighbourhood. Suhaila (1999) relates:

You know that's what it's like here, people talk about everything. When a woman goes somewhere, they immediately wonder who else was there, what she did there and so on ... Yesterday we went on an excursion after work with our colleagues. Six women and five men ... It was completely normal. We all work together, what difference does it make then? We didn't think about it, here the men, there the women. We sang on the bus all the way home. That was nice. There are situations like that, but then there'll be a lot of talk about it.

Anfal women wear dark clothes. All through the 1990s they did not attend weddings or public events. The only social gatherings they took part in were funerals.

In Iraqi Kurdistan, the dead are buried on the same day as or on the day after their death. For the mourning ceremony men and women meet separately over a period of seven days, men in the mosque and women at the house of the deceased or in a tent erected in the street. Assisted by neighbours and friends, the family serves tea and – if affordable – food. The women recite and sing Qur'an verses, wail and lament loudly, while beating their breasts and legs, some so excessively that they faint or injure themselves.

In the aftermath of Anfal, mourning ceremonies had particular significance for women survivors. They were an occasion to leave the house, to meet other women, to exchange news and express their thoughts as Amira (1999) describes:

*Qu.: Do you have contact to other women whose husbands disappeared?*

Of course, we are so many Anfal here ... and so many from my village. We see each other, we visit each other. Sometimes we see each other at the bread-baking place, but mostly at funerals. Yesterday I attended a funeral. Poor Fatma, her husband is Anfal, and now her son is dead, too. He smuggled across the frontline at night. They shot him. He was totally disfigured, and the friend who was with him broke his back. He's now in hospital in Sulaimania. I spent three days at the funeral. Such a pity! You must have seen it passing by car, it's right here at the corner, the house in mourning. All the men are sitting outside, the men from the mourning ceremony. Poor Fatma.

*Qu: Do you talk about your situation when you meet?*

Of course we talk about it, how everything happened. There are a lot of people here from my village, we all know each other. And we always meet at funerals. We can only meet here at funerals. Where else can we go? The three metres to the bread-baking place ... and to funerals. And then once a month I go to pick up the money for the children (...)

*Qu: And do you ever visit members of your family in the village?*

Oh yes, sometimes I go there. But it's not different there. Misery everywhere ... ! Last time I went was for the funeral of my cousin's boy. He was twelve years old. He fell into a deep well in Sumud. He fell thirty metres. They pulled him out after what seemed an eternity but he was already dead. A terrible pity! I attended that funeral as well. My cousin, the poor thing, she nearly went crazy. He was born in 1988, the boy, he was clever. My cousin's husband is also Anfal. And now the boy ... It's really enough to make you lose your mind. We all went to his funeral.

Amira's account indicates the importance of funerals for social exchange and communication. At the same time they presented women with an occasion to physically and publicly express their own pain in ritual form. In my interpretation, funerals served as a vicarious mourning ritual for their own losses.

Amira's narrative also highlights how Anfal survivors re-live the agony of their multiple losses when confronted with death in their environment. Their attendance at funerals became a metaphor for inconsolable grief and reinforced what they perceived as an endless chain of catastrophes. Amira intertwines her neighbour's and her cousin's loss of their husbands during Anfal with the more recent losses of their sons; I met numerous other men and women who blended the losses they suffered during Anfal with losses experienced later during the exodus, the internal war between parties or those caused by accidents or illness. Whatever happened to these survivors seemed part of a continuum that had begun with the havoc of Anfal.

Anfal women were thus caught in a complex system of social constraints and expectations interacting with the prolonged grief that resulted from the uncertainty surrounding the fate of their relatives. In their own and society's perception, the disappearance of their male relatives emerged as the dominant pain, sidelining other experiences of violence and loss. Reduced to waiting and grieving, these women were incapable of developing new life perspectives. Bereft of their male relatives and breadwinners, their lives were now socially conceptualized without men and thus without joy and happiness.

Asked about their perspectives, many women said: *dânishin* - we sit. Beyond its literal meaning, the term was used as a metaphor for the paralysis that had gripped their lives. The women had internalized the social perception, that with the disappearance of their relatives, their own lives were halted.

Only very rarely did the desire for a different life show through in Anfal women's statements in the 1990s, like when Suhaila (1999) spoke about some Anfal women's desire to remarry:

*Qu.: When you meet among Anfal women, do you talk about your experiences and your desires?*

Of course we do (she lowers her voice), of course we talk about everything. You see, many Anfal women are very young and naturally they want to be alive. These women have been denied everything. If a woman has a husband, she has lots of things. It's natural that women think about it – they're young. How could they not think about it? They see themselves as lost, betrayed and condemned. And everything else they do is tasteless. They don't enjoy anything. It makes a really big difference if you don't have a husband. It's as different as heaven and earth ... There's no way out of the situation. You think about it and you think you'll never manage. Of course all of them think like that. Then they think they'll get married again. OK, if they marry they're afraid their husband might come back one day. So you don't find any peace. Or that they'll lose their children. ... Many women sit because of that.

Suhaila, however, is talking indirectly, about »the women«, not in the first person about her own desires. Only many years later, in 2012, would she speak more explicitly retrospectively about her own desires and her lost youth:

You see, of course I would have liked to pretty myself. I would have liked to dress in yellow and red. I would have liked to put on a necklace and earrings ... Of course I would have liked to do all that. We were young, we were not in the age for being a widow (Suhaila 2012, see also Chapter 15).

In 1999 Fatma gave a prosaic summary of her life in few sentences that shed light on the interplay of social, economic and psychological aspects and on how the hope for the return of her husband seems to be the only way out.

My husband was chosen by my father (...) But he was a good man. We had a good relationship, no problems. We were relatives. We had a wonderful life in Zinana. We had agriculture, we had a garden in front of our house, we had several tractors in the village. Zinana was a beautiful village, it was big, close to the road. We

had everything we needed. And then Anfal came. My husband is Anfal, one of my brothers and two cousins. I spent some months in Dibs prison ... with my daughters. Then we came out. We came to Kifri and hid with distant relatives, sometimes here, sometimes there. Everybody was afraid to take us in because the army was looking for us all over the place. My mother is still alive. I have two daughters; they're grown up and married. Now I'm alone with my mother. No sons to work for me. None of the extended family looks after us. But that's not the problem. I can work, I've had work before. Sometimes I work in agriculture; sometimes I weave carpets at home. Sometimes we get some sheep from humanitarian organizations. Our life is miserable. With Anfal our lives disappeared as well (...) But I'm so afraid my husband will come back and I'll be dead (Fatma, 1999).

### *The expectation of provision*

As shown up to now, the interaction between women's prolonged psychological suffering and their socio-economic conditions confined them to the passive role of waiting women, blocking any attempt to develop a new outlook on life or new plans. This explains their immobility and their reluctance to return to their home villages or engage in long-term projects aimed at improving their situation.

Up until 2003, Anfal women concentrated their efforts exclusively on short-term survival activities, and they claimed and hoped for models of provision. The first of these was the return of their husbands or other male relatives. Alternatively they aspired to receive support from their in-laws' or fathers' families, which entailed accepting a life of conflict and even maltreatment. Many placed their hopes in the capacity of their children to provide for them once they were old enough. They also made strong claims on the Kurdistan Regional Government and international organizations, demanding pensions, food and houses rather than income-generating projects or counselling programmes of a legal, social or educational nature. They saw the latter as »just talking«

rather than substantial assistance that would make a genuine difference to the meagreness of their lives.

These aspirations of being provided for are consistent with the gender roles and concepts embraced by the traditional patriarchal family model in Kurdish rural society. At the same time, they reflect a structural problem of both Iraqi and Kurdish society. For decades, the Baath regime had set up a complex system of welfare, control and dependence, of provision and punishment. An inflated government and administrative apparatus, free health, educational and social services, subsidized rents and government credit programmes and the monthly distribution of food rations nationwide rendered the Kurdish (and Iraqi) population entirely dependent on government goods and services. Kurdish political parties and the Kurdish Regional Government took over the Baath administrative and government institutions in 1991 without introducing structural change. The role of the state as chief provider, now »under Kurdish flag«, remained untouched. Powerless to fulfil the Kurdish people's expectations as a result of the double embargo in the 1990s, the Kurdish Regional Government delegated responsibility for the supply of goods and services to international aid organizations (Winter, 2002).

The attitude of the population and government alike towards international aid organizations as the key suppliers of goods and services was diametrically opposed to the latter's concept of »help for self-help«, local capacity building and sustainable development. Income-generating projects aimed at fostering small production initiatives such as shoemaking or candle workshops were doomed to failure from the outset. Local markets were distorted by a double embargo, borders were closed and conflict was omnipresent. In addition, the projects lacked the acceptance of a local population accustomed to a functioning oil-based welfare state.<sup>154</sup>

**154** I still recall the endless discussions at UN coordination meetings on how to convince villagers of the sustainable, energy-saving aspects of building

The international aid focus on demolishing collective towns and redeveloping the rural infrastructure failed to acknowledge the specific needs of the survivors of the Anfal Campaign, in particular of women. As mentioned earlier, some Anfal women were highly creative, rushing from one aid programme to the next, securing food here, acquiring a sheep there, investing what was left of their strength in survival for a few more weeks. They had no interest in fulfilling eventual conditions of sustainability linked to the distribution of goods; they were just interested in converting received goods to money in order to survive the next days and weeks.

These aid programmes, designed without any consideration of the survivors' psychological situation and the economic and social constraints they faced, merely added to their stress.

### **9.3 Political and societal responses to Anfal women**

#### *Victimhood discourse and the negligence of the political class*

All through the 1990s, initiatives from Kurdish political parties and the Kurdistan Regional Government in support of Anfal survivors were conspicuous by their absence. In the dramatic overall economic situation, which was accompanied by a weak administration, their contribution was confined to recommending »Anfal widows« to international aid organizations as a particularly vulnerable group that needed looking after. While the widows and children of *peshmerga* fighters linked to political parties had long received pensions and donations, Anfal women were first granted pensions in 1999. The latter amounted to very much less than widow's pensions and failed to cover their basic needs.

houses with traditional mud bricks. The local inhabitants, on the other hand, preferred to reconstruct their houses on more modern designs using cement.

Kurdish political parties and the Kurdish government also showed a blatant lack of political interest in Anfal survivors. They were absorbed in the political struggle to obtain Kurdish autonomy status and international guarantees and - after 1995 - in the internal party war on power and resources. The Anfal Campaign had become a political topic in negotiations with the international community, bolstering Kurdish claims for international guarantees and autonomy, but its victims and survivors were largely ignored. Indeed, Kurdish politicians rarely entered areas affected by Anfal. In conversations with Kurdish party and government representatives, I never ceased to be amazed at their lack of awareness about living conditions in places like Germyan, despite the high toll the region had paid for Kurdish autonomy.

Apart from the excuse of dealing with other burning political priorities in the 1990s, the Kurdish political elite avoided contact with Anfal survivors for quite another reason. Firstly, they had a latent fear of being confronted with questions by survivors alluding to the ambiguous role of the political parties and the *peshmerga*, who had failed to protect neither civilians during Anfal. Secondly, they anticipated survivor testimonies about the »betrayal« by Kurdish collaborators and disapproval of the latter's impunity and reintegration in Kurdish society after 1991.

Both topics marked a rupture in the dominant national narrative that saw Anfal as a crime against innocent civilians, and posed a strong challenge to Kurdish society in circumstances that were both fragile and provisional.

The media referred to Anfal, the poison gas attack on Halabja and the faces of Anfal women, etched with suffering, as an image of the national tragedy. The voices and testimonies of women Anfal survivors, on the other hand, were not echoed in the local media or in public discourse. Their concrete experiences and the scandalous hardships they went through in the 1990s were buried under the symbolism of national victimhood. Their public representation as passive victims in mourning further cemented the social immobility they were confined to within their communities.

*Kurdish women's organizations - the debate on remarriage*

Kurdish women's organizations were largely affiliated with and dominated by the various political parties in Kurdistan. They addressed Anfal women mostly in a charitable sense as a specifically vulnerable group, setting up literacy courses and income-generating projects such as sewing and carpet workshops. Successful to a certain extent among Anfal women who lived in or near the urban centres, for the aforementioned reasons these projects failed in the Germyan area. Like their male counterparts, female Kurdish politicians were urban-oriented and rarely set foot in the remote Germyan region. Hence they remained ignorant of the grim conditions under which Germyan women lived and of their psychological state. They fought for legal and social reforms, pursuing the Western ideal of the modern urban woman. In this context, they saw the illiterate Anfal women of Germyan as backward, steeped in feudal tradition; they did not seriously engage with these women's testimonies and claims.

In this sense, they reproduced the predominant discourse on Anfal women as passive victims. A cross-party alliance set up in 1995 as a lobby for Anfal women discussed a catalogue of claims to be put forward to the Kurdistan Regional Government, including the issuing of pensions. In the course of the debate, however, they agreed on one claim only: permission for Anfal women to remarry. They lobbied until 1999, when the Kurdistan Regional Parliament passed a corresponding decree. The focus of their lobbying efforts, however, sidelined the real issues Anfal women grappled with and revealed them as wanting in empathy and insight into these women's lives, since - as outlaid above - remarriage for the vast majority was not an option.

In May 1996, the then newly opened non-partisan women centre KHANZAD in Sulaimania launched an invitation to a face-to-face meeting between a group of Anfal women from the Germyan region and female Kurdish politicians. The aim of the meeting was to bridge the gap between the social realities of the former and the policy and activities of the latter

and to pave the way for future dialogue. Five Anfal women from Sumud attended the meeting, including Suhaila and the late Mahsum, as well as a number of prominent politicians, among them Hero Ibrahim Ahmed, the founder of the PUK-affiliated Kurdistan Women's Union – and as Jalal Talabani's wife, later Iraq's first lady – and her close and equally prominent colleague, Kafia Sulaiman. A number of PUK and Communist Party women delegates from the Kurdistan Regional Parliament also attended. The internal party war made the attendance of women affiliated to the KDP impossible. It was an unusual experience for the politicians to take a seat in the audience, while Anfal women took centre stage and gave their testimonies. Women like Mahsum – illiterate, injured and trapped in the daily struggle for survival – made use of this rare occasion, presenting their case and their demands. Undaunted, they expressed their bitterness and disappointment at the Kurdish political elite's lack of interest, specifying why the petition for remarriage showed blindness to their genuine needs. At one point Suhaila asked:

Do you seriously assume that after all I've gone through, after all my suffering, my waiting for my husband, my grief for him, after all my tears, I would of all things now have the energy and just want to look for a new husband? (work protocols, 1996).

A confrontational discussion ensued. The politicians felt maligned and began to itemize what they had done for Anfal survivors in the past. In addition, they listed the many urgent problems on their agenda and the other vulnerable groups in Kurdistan to be considered, such as Kirkuk refugees and the recent victims of the internal party war.

The tension finally erupted when Geshaw,<sup>155</sup> the wife of a prominent politician, remarked: »Look, you should come to a point of closure and stop living in the past. You know very well that your husbands are not coming back« (work protocols, 1996). Mahsum immediately began to cry; other An-

155 The name has been changed.

fal women responded with outrage. They strongly rejected Geshaw's statement and at the same time suspected her of withholding concrete information on the fate of their relatives. This episode illustrates the tenacity with which Anfal women clung to their hopes for the return of their disappeared relatives and that for them the public enunciation of the widely assumed death of the latter was equivalent to abandoning them. From their experience with female relatives of missing persons in Argentina, Kordon et al. (1988) describe that some women regarded therapists' attempts to encourage them to accept their loss as complicity with the perpetrators. In the eyes of Anfal women, Geshaw had shown herself to be guilty of such complicity.

The meeting served to highlight the remoteness between Anfal women and urban Kurdish politicians. Although the latter »promised« greater involvement in the Gernyan region in the meeting, they failed to initiate a more in-depth exchange later on.

### *Societal approaches to assistance*

A discussion on a suitable approach to Anfal women and their pressing needs did not take place in Kurdish administrative and public service structures during the 1990s; instead, the women were subsumed under the category of »female-headed households«, without further consideration of their specific psychological and social situation. There was a general refusal within the Kurdistan Regional Government and among politicians of the various political parties to acknowledge a need of specific assistance to the group of women Anfal survivors. There was instead a fear to privilege Anfal survivors over the many other vulnerable groups of the Kurdish society and consequently a claim, that Anfal women's situation was not different from other widows. I will later show that this discourse completely reversed after 2003, when the international recognition of Anfal as genocide became a priority in the Kurdish political discourse (see

Chapter 13). For those unable to return to their home villages, politicians presented construction plans for »model villages« where Anfal women could find shelter. Such planning procedures showed little sensitivity to how they might appear to Anfal survivors who had spent years in forced settlement camps.

Overall, the 1990s saw a complete absence of social discourse on the psychological impact of violence in Iraqi Kurdistan. The public health sector, which functioned poorly at the best of times, was dominated by concepts of conventional medicine. Physicians tended to an obsessive attachment to modern instrumental medicine and pharmaceuticals and to be at a loss in emergency conditions. Clients with severe psychological disturbances were referred to psychiatric hospital departments, where treatment consisted of drugs and electric shocks. At the time there were very few trained psychologists in Iraqi Kurdistan; the study of psychology was possible only in Baghdad. In the social perception, psychological difficulties were equated with a brain defect and insanity. Employees of public social services, local physicians and social scientists had little knowledge of the dialectics of trauma and even less access to the relevant international debate.

Another of the protocols written by the aforementioned team of social workers who visited Anfal women in the Bnari Gil/Dawde resettlement programme contains a passage about a woman who had lost her husband and several other relatives during Anfal and now lived in a village with her cousin:

She is waiting for death. She has no desire in life because it has all been crushed in the Anfalization disaster. She feels that life is hell.

(The team suggests): The solution is to speak to her kindly to ease her sadness and convince her that life is beautiful and that it is better to forget the past and be optimistic (Protocols Bnari Gil/Dawde, 1997/1998).

Many of the professionals I encountered meted out this kind of »cheer-up« advice and were convinced that Anfal women who remained close to each other ended up depressing each other and sank deeper into the depths of their sorrow. Proposals were made to separate Anfal women from each other and encourage them to mix with other people. Apart from the blame-the-victim tenor of these proposals, they undermined the one genuinely strong resource these women possessed: their collectively shared suffering and the support networks they had developed as a result.

Suhaila (1999) firmly rejected suggestions that Anfal women should be distracted from their thoughts:

You see, the fact is it HAPPENED to us, so how could we not think about it? It came upon us, the evil, the dictator ... You can't just think it happened and now it has passed, it's over. You keep on thinking about it whether you like it or not. All of the women say this. And then we meet and we talk about it ...

### *Anfal women's disappointment and bitterness*

When the Kurdish administration was installed in 1991, Anfal women had initially expected recognition and assistance, but soon became bitterly disappointed by the negligence of the political class and its lack of respect for their contribution to the Kurdish liberation struggle. Their disappointment added to their pain and underpinned their sense of marginalization.

In 1999, I asked Rezan whether she talked to other Anfal women about the possibility of becoming active and putting forward demands. She replied:

Yes, we do talk about it. But what can we do? Nobody does a thing for us.

(Her mother intervenes): Look, the husbands of these women are all Anfal. They should give them money every month, they should support their children. Here, these two children, they go to school. That's expensive.

*Qu: Have you gone to see the person in charge of dealing with your demands?*

No, there's no sense in doing that. Other people from Sumud have done it. But nothing came of it (Rezan, 1999).

Rezan's frustration at the negligence by the government and the Kurdish parties translated into a sense of competition with other groups of victims in the Kurdish community:

You see, my husband was a supporter of the resistance movement. He was even carrying a weapon when he was captured. The widows of dead *peshmerga*, they get a monthly pension of up to 750 Iraqi Dinar if they have children. But Anfal victims don't count as martyrs.<sup>156</sup>

(Her mother interrupts again): They build houses for refugees but do nothing for Anfal survivors. They build hospitals and schools for them ... but Anfal families don't get anything (Rezan, 1999).

Payman (2000) concludes her Anfal narrative on a note of anger:

Nothing has been done for us ever since. Wherever we go, wherever we refer to, no one can do anything for us. Our suffering will never end.

Anfal women's anger would, however, find clear expression only after the fall of the Baath regime in 2003. It lay dormant until then, veiled by other sentiments and experiences: exhaustion, waiting, hoping and the all-pervasive fear of the perpetrator still in power and thus the threat of a renewed catastrophe.

### *Political instability*

The continuing presence of the Baath regime was particularly evident in the Germyan region, situated in the immediate neighbourhood of the unsecured frontline between

**156** Martyr (*shahid*): a person who gave his or her life for the Kurdish cause.

Kurdish forces and Iraqi troops, an area that was not secured by international guarantees of a long-term peace agreement. There were frequent clashes on the frontline, in which Iraqi soldiers shot at farmers who unintentionally crossed the invisible line and killed those who were caught smuggling goods at night from one side to the other. The movements of Iraqi soldiers and tanks on the hills could be seen from Sumud, a mere one and a half kilometres away. Hence, whenever the Iraqi regime uttered a threat against the Kurdish-controlled region, the inhabitants of Germyan feared the immediate entry of Iraqi troops.

This fear became a reality in August 1996. The internal war between the PUK and the KDP and the conquest of the Kurdish capital of Erbil by PUK forces compelled the KDP to seek aid from the Baath regime. The incredulity of this move for the inhabitants of Germyan, who were primarily affiliated with the PUK, led to a sense of suspicion that still resonates in Kurdish society today. Iraqi troops marched into Erbil and assisted the KDP forces in advancing their troops as far as the city of Sulaimania, well beyond the area they controlled. Once more, thousands of Kurds fled to Iran. This time it was people close to the PUK or those who worked in internationally funded aid projects that fled in panic from both the KDP forces and the Baath regime.

In September 1996, I was part of a delegation of German aid workers who travelled to Iran to visit refugee camps erected by the Iranian government for Iraqi-Kurdish refugees. Our task was to make a preliminary assessment with a view to aid programmes. In the Tapa Rash camp near the Iranian-Kurdish city of Kermanshah, we met Anfal women from Sumud, among them Suhaila, Payman and Habsa and her sisters. Bewildered and almost speechless, they found it difficult to talk about their lives in the camp. They were shocked and frightened at this new escalation of violence, this time the result of an alliance between a Kurdish party they had trusted and the hated regime. Suhaila, normally outspoken and energetic, said to me: »So look at us, how we meet again« and remained silent.

Habsa later told me about her escape in 1996. She was »on the road« again with her children, her sisters and their children, sixteen people in all, equipped with a few blankets and some bread.

It was terrible. We were hunted by the KDP forces. They were behind us, we were in panic. I could feel them at my back all the time. When we'd almost reached the Iranian border, shooting began behind us. My daughter, who was eight at the time, panicked. She shouted, »Mother, please surrender, please surrender, they're going to shoot us«. But I took my children and we literally threw ourselves across the border. Once we reached Iranian territory, we were immediately helped by the Iranians (Habsa, 2010).

The situation soon calmed down; the Iraqi troops withdrew, the former status of two separately administered areas under the KDP and the PUK respectively was restored and the refugees returned to Iraqi Kurdistan. For the Kurdish population, however, the sudden return of the Baath regime to the Kurdish areas was yet another reminder of the instability of their status and the fragility of their lives. It intensified Anfal women's fear of a repeat of Anfal and their perception of their lives as an endless chain of suffering.

When I asked Amira in 1999 if she feared the return of the Iraqi troops, she pointed to the nearby hills where Iraqi tanks were visible and said:

Have they ever really gone? Maybe tomorrow morning we'll wake up and find them in front of our door. But you know, whether they come back or not, we're lost anyway. Who cares about us? Our husbands have been missing for eleven years ... who wants to know about us? Nobody helps us. Nobody tells us anything. Don't you think people in Sulaimania know something? But no one tells us anything (Amira, 1999).

Thus, in Anfal women's perception, political instability blended with their overall sense of abandonment and marginalization. Combined with the psychological and socio-economic factors that governed their lives, this prolonged the Anfal trauma and held them trapped in a vise of hopelessness and immobility.

## 10 Anfal women's resources and strengths

Despite their experiences of extreme violence during Anfal and unmitigated penury in the aftermath, Anfal women survived. While - as shown above - they lacked economic resources and political acknowledgement, and most of them could not rely on social and familiar support, they still mobilized enormous energies to persevere, bring up their children and rebuild their lives and relationships. Approaching them as victims per se and as a traumatized group would fail to address their multiple and creative responses to their traumatic experiences and would further victimize them. In the following, I focus on the strengths and resources of Anfal women. I will explore what helped them to survive and cope, what were their sources of strength (German: Kraftquellen) and the comforting images (Reddemann, 2001) they took recourse to and what trauma-protective factors (Ottomeyer, 2011) were involved.

### *The children - source of hope and consolation*

Asked what gave them the strength to go on with their lives in the aftermath of Anfal, both Faima and Amira replied without hesitation: »My children.« (Amira, 1999; Faima, 2010). For Anfal women with children, the need to »pull them through« and see them grow was the driving force behind their efforts to stay alive. Their relationship to their children was, however, ambivalent. On the one hand, their children reminded them of the loss of their other children and their

husbands. The burden of having to provide food for – in many cases – a large number of children weighed heavily on them in times of extreme hardship. In addition, the children’s fatherless childhood and their future were sources of great worry to the women. Indeed, Anfal women’s daughters, in particular, suffered from stigmatization similar to that of their mothers. Their fatherless childhood was considered a blemish on their virtue, and those who reached marital age in the 1990s often had difficulties finding a spouse.

Many Anfal women developed overprotective attitudes towards their children. They regarded them as without opportunities and developed a specific feeling of responsibility to protect them from further misfortune. Picking up on a concept of Adriana Maggi, David Becker defines this attitude as the »relationship of the compassionate gaze« (Becker, 1992; see also Chapter 8). Anfal women regarded bringing up their children as a moral obligation to the disappeared. Faima (2002) recalls her last conversation with her husband, who asked her to take care of her new-born child:

He came and said, »Faima, I’m not that important, but you have to take care of this child, and not only of this newborn child, don’t forget the other children...« He said, »This is the day of the last judgement. I won’t see you again.« He said good-bye and left. A little later the soldiers brought me his identity card.

And Suhaila (2010) recalls how her husband entrusted their daughter to her in the last moment she saw him:

(...) He stretched his arms out to me and my daughter (she shows how he stretched out his arms). He said, »Suhaila, take care of this child.« And the soldiers dragged us away from each other. I held my daughter tight.

The children were a bond to the missing, a symbol of their presence. Amira (1999) says of her husband:

At night I dream that he’s beside me and that he looks at what the children are doing and worries about them.

As seen above, most Anfal women fiercely rejected the idea of remarrying and leaving their children. They raised them sharing with them their own strong conviction that the missing would one day return.

At the same time, the children were a source of consolation for the women. They stood for their hopes for change and a better future. Few women kept their children out of school like Payman or sent them to work like Runak, who hoped they would soon have an income, so that she could take some rest herself. In contrast, Habsa, Suhaila, Amira and Faima invested in their children's education and consequently in a more promising future for them. One of the chief reasons why Anfal women refused to return to their home villages in the 1990s was the availability of schooling for their children in the collective towns. I remember numerous discussions with the women within the resettlement programmes: my colleagues and I were convinced that a return to the villages would improve the women's lives and considered the access of the children to education somewhat secondary. Today, I feel ashamed of my previous argumentation, when I see sons and daughters of Anfal women who took university degrees, constitute a powerful voice of the second-generation Anfal survivors and are a source of pride and satisfaction for their mothers.

### *Physical strength and fearlessness*

Intent on bringing up their children well, Anfal women proved to be highly creative when it came to catering for them under conditions of near destitution. Amira fought tooth and nail for the rights of her children with her husband's kin, enduring their hostility with stubborn indifference. Rezan, who lived with her brother's family, stood her ground when they planned to take her fourteen-year-old daughter out of school and arrange for her marriage.

Habsa, Faima, Rabea and Hataw took on all kinds of work to keep themselves and their children alive. They proved to be fearless when, in the immediate aftermath of Anfal and

under the direct eyes of the perpetrators, they risked life and limb to leave the camp and go to work for Arab landowners. After 1991, they continued to work, going far beyond socially accepted »female work« and leaving themselves open to defamation and social sanctions. Those who engaged in smuggling activities across the Iraqi frontline had daily encounters with the very people who had persecuted them and killed their relatives.

I once came across a location in the region of Dawde where crude oil bubbled out of the ground from »wild« oil wells. Anfal survivors had formed moulds to collect the oil over a period of days and subsequently sell it to tractor owners, who in turn were able to use it unrefined. This was a highly dangerous operation aggravated by the close proximity of the Iraqi frontline, where Iraqi soldiers had orders to fire at the slightest movement.

Anfal women queued for hours after work at the sparsely located water points or at a health centre to collect medicine for their children. They walked miles to collect firewood. Photographs of Anfal women carrying bundles of firewood three times larger than themselves taken by German photographer Ralph Bäcker in 1992/1993 give an impression of their ordeal.<sup>157</sup>

Anfal women proved to be physically strong and acquired numerous skills traditionally reserved for men: with their bare hands they built bread ovens, houses and shelters.

As shown above in the 1990s the women tended to downplay the self-valorizing impact of their work. Today, however, they are proud of the strength and courage they showed at that time and use to refer to the self-image of »hardworking and tough women«, an experience that distinguishes them from other women who did not share their experience. Looking back to that time, Rabea (2012) says today:

**157** See <http://www.version-foto.de> (last accessed 15 March 2013).

We were young, we were strong; day and night we worked for our children. God helped us ... I did not care if I was hungry. It was important to me to feed the children (...) At that time - who could stop us? I had to pull through six children. Who could then dare to ask me where I went or what I did. We did not listen to anybody then. Not to the men, not to anybody.

And Habsa says:

We weren't afraid of anything. After what had already happened to us, what was there to be afraid of? (Habsa, 2010).

### *Family and social support*

Family and social support is regarded as a key resilience factor in the face of loss and potential trauma (Keilson, 1979). As seen earlier, most Anfal women were entirely bereft of family support. Yet those who could rely on their fathers' or husbands' families drew strength from this support system. Even Amira and Rezan, whose lives with their relatives were conflict-ridden, considered themselves lucky to enjoy the protection of their relatives and not to have to work. They looked on women who lacked family bonds with compassion and considered them forsaken. They would say *kesyan niye* - they have no one.

### *Political partisanship*

Political activism has proved to be a trauma-protective factor for victims of torture, detention and violence in different cultural and political contexts (Becker, 1992; Lagos et al., 1994). Embedding their individual experience in a political and historical discourse helps survivors to comprehend their suffering, to give it meaning and relevance (German: *Bedeutung* and *Bedeutsamkeit*), to maintain a sense of control and manageability or, in Antonovsky's words, a *sense of*

*coherence*, protecting them from developing symptoms and dynamics of trauma (Antonovsky, 1997).

Habsa and Suhaila were both politically active before and after Anfal. Both describe how their commitment and activities helped them to cope. Suhaila argues that political activism and her experience of imprisonment and torture »prepared her« and gave her the strength and social space to move beyond traditional role models:

Yes, of course people talk about me. But I've been working since my childhood; I've also been politically active. So people think anyway »she's a man« (she laughs) and don't talk about me (Suhaila, 1999).

My torturers made no difference between men and women. Ever since, I've stopped making a difference, too (Suhaila, 2011).

Habsa (2010) describes, how her joint activities with Suhaila in the wake of Anfal helped her coping:

At the time I used to say to Suhaila, »Other women go to bed at night and cry and think about their missing loved ones and their dead children ... and cry ... But you and I are busy all day. We meet and talk, we engage for other women, we go to government offices for them, we get support from the governor for them and the ministry ... and at night we're tired and go to bed and think: what do I have to do tomorrow ... I have to go to that office for Fahima, I have to get medicine for Gulistan ... and all that. It was good for us. Our minds were occupied, we had no time to dwell on all those dark thoughts at night.

### *Religious faith*

Anfal women frequently refer to Islam and their religious faith in their narratives. They refer to God as a witness of their suffering. When memories overwhelm them in the course of their narrations, they raise their hands and say, »God is great«. They use religious images to describe their experiences. They speak of Anfal, for instance, as »the Day

of Judgement«. When asked to what extent their faith has helped them through the darkest time, the unanimous reply is »Of course it was important. What would we have done without God's consolation and surveillance?« Rabea (2012) says, that it was God to help her to feed her six children.

I have never explicitly discussed questions of religiosity and faith with Anfal women or looked into its sense-giving or explanatory function in more detail. In the many everyday situations we shared, however, I saw them diligently perform five prayers a day regardless of the circumstances. Whenever possible, they would attend Friday prayers in the mosque and fast during Ramadan. In this sense, religious procedures contributed to the structuring of their daily lives, reassuring them of reality and a certain amount of continuity amidst the chaos. Many of them have dreamt for years of making the pilgrimage to Mecca, and those who eventually did (it was only possible after 2003) describe their journey as a purification and a consoling experience. »I'm clean now and I'm calm« was Suhaila's comment on her return from her journey to Mecca in 2011.

### *Anfal women's collective structure*

When I asked Payman (2010) what had helped her most during and after Anfal, she replied without thinking twice:

If I had been alone, I would have died long ago. But there were lots of us. We shared the same fate - so we just carried on.

Anfal women shared their experiences of extreme violence and loss and the hardships of the life in the aftermath: uncertainty, poverty, constant stress and social marginalization. Under this pressure, Anfal women in Sumud closed ranks. Beneath the level of political organization or foundation of self-help committees, they established strong informal networks and became a tightly knit community, connected to each other through a web of countless invisible communication channels. Whenever I visited an Anfal woman in her

home in the 1990s, we were joined within minutes by dozens of other women. Anfal women met to walk in groups to water points, health centres and governmental offices. They went in groups for agricultural work and smuggling activities and organized male protection when seeking risky day-labour jobs (see Habsa's account, 2010).

They spent the evenings together sitting in front of their houses in groups, exchanging memories and news. In a continuous communicative process they wove a collective narrative about Anfal, which enabled them to speak out, but also shielded and comforted them and thus assumed a trauma-protective function.

They developed a strong sense of collectivity and demonstrated solidarity and loyalty towards each other. While women in Kurdish rural society traditionally safeguard the honour of female family members and are active in sanctioning women who violate the code of conduct, this mechanism failed to register with Anfal women. They supported each other in the lean years when going out to work meant facing neighbourhood suspicion; they defended each other against moral accusations and expressed understanding for women who allegedly violated the code of honour, thereby transgressing a number of social taboos (see Runak's and Suhaila's statements above). Although most of them were illiterate, Anfal women proved to be well-informed about political developments in Kurdistan and Iraq. On the rare occasions they spoke to political officials or international visitors, as in the aforementioned meeting with Kurdish politicians in 1996, they were unabashed, outspoken and articulate in their demands for recognition and assistance.

### *The will to survive and to live*

In the company of Anfal women in the 1990s, I was often intrigued by the concomitance of the horrible memories and images that dominated their thoughts and narrations, on the one hand, and an incredibly strong will of life and wonder-

ful sense of humour that broke through in many shared moments of their daily lives, on the other. The women could dwell jointly on horrific memories of unheard-of atrocities in one moment, and turn to extensive gossiping, laughing and struggling with daily problems in the next moment. An episode that took place in 1996 impressed me greatly and illustrates this fortitude:

Within the resettlement project in the Bnari Gil region, we had seen that women whose husbands were missing were not prepared to return to their original villages. One day we invited them to visit the villages without further commitment and see the first stages of reconstruction for themselves. Most of them rejected the idea outright, declaring that under no circumstances would they set foot in the place where their ordeal had begun. Determined nevertheless, we said we would arrive the next day with a bus and they were free to join us. To our great surprise, more than fifty women came to the appointment early the next morning; we had to organize a second bus to accommodate everyone. On the way to the villages, which the women had not seen for eight years, they sang laments, many of them crying and beating their breasts, legs and heads. This collective expression of grief was so powerful that my colleagues and I had some anxious moments. Thinking we had made a terrible mistake with the excursion and unwittingly triggered the women's traumatic memories, we discussed turning back. The situation changed abruptly when we stopped at the first village. The women approached the houses of those who had already moved back there. Although outraged that a number of returnee families were former *jash*, they went on to talk at length to other families, exchanging news of relatives and old neighbours and discussing politics. As we stopped at each village, various women would point out their former housing sites and water places to the others. At a certain point we took a break in a shady spot on the banks of the Awa Spi River, close to the village of quite a large group of Anfal women. While eating bread, tomatoes and melons, they told each other stories from their childhood and about the different places we had just

visited. They walked about, pulled up the skirts and trousers of their Kurdish clothes to wade through the river, picked figs from the trees and romped around with the children, laughing. There was a lightness about them that left me and my colleagues stunned in the light of what we had witnessed a few hours previously: it would not be an exaggeration to say they were in high spirits.

Back in Sumud I asked them what the day had been like for them. Almost all of them saw it as positive that their children had seen where they come from and where their tragedy began. None of them said she had enjoyed the day. They had already reverted again to the role of mourning women. Fifteen years later – in 2011 – some of those women recalled this outing vividly. The daughter of one of them, six years old at the time of the excursion, remembered it as very special day in her childhood.

The excursion changed my view of Anfal women. Although their pain had found outward expression that day, the unexpected opportunity to move outside the given social frame and the physical (re-)connection to the sites of life before Anfal tore the veil of sorrow that had enveloped them for a moment, allowing their will to live and their vitality to emerge. The episode was symptomatic of their hidden verve, but also of the extent to which these women, many of them with their lives ahead of them, had internalized the role of women in grief and how it had rendered them incapable of mobilizing their resources to cope with a traumatic past. When I later encountered Klaus Ottomeyer's (2011) description of trauma as »eingeklemmtes Leben« (trapped life) this episode came to my mind. The lives of Anfal women ground to a halt in the aftermath of Anfal. Their energies and their vitality were suffocated by immense pain and uncertainty, which in turn was reinforced and prolonged by the austerity of their lives and the constraints of social and gender norms. It was only many years later, with the social and political changes to come, that they could reengage with their own lives. And it was only then that they could retrospectively value and appreciate their own admirable strength in the years of extreme hardship after Anfal.

# 11 Summary and discussion

## 1988-2003

### *Traumatic experiences*

During the Anfal Campaign in 1988, women in the rural Germanyan area experienced a massive attack on their physical and psychological integrity and the destruction of their life-worlds. They were separated from their husbands, siblings, sons, daughters and other relatives and detained under humiliating conditions without privacy or sanitation, punished arbitrarily and beaten by Iraqi soldiers. They were forced to witness the death of numerous children and elderly; they were forbidden to bury the dead or mourn them. Their traditional world views and their self-concepts as caring mothers and wives were deeply shattered. They survived physically exhausted, psychologically drained and plagued by strong feelings of guilt and shame. Their loss of trust in a secure world was aggravated by acts of »betrayal« by some of their own people, who had collaborated with the perpetrators.

### *Trauma narratives*

The narrations of Anfal women seven, eleven and fourteen years later echo shock and disorientation they felt at the time and endured for years in the aftermath. The disrupted and fragmented structure of their Anfal narrations reflects the lasting impact of violence on the capacity to remember

and on the structure of memory. Anfal women collectively share their experiences of violence and loss; in a constant process of communication, they interweave their individual memories into one collectively shared narrative of suffering. It would be short-sighted to interpret this solely as a strategy to escape individual confrontation with trauma. It is also an attempt to collectively construct a narrative that is both tellable and bearable at a time when economic hardship, social immobility and political uncertainty rendered individual processes of confrontation and coping impossible. The collective narrative reflects the women's conflict between the wish to speak out and the wish to silence their experience, which Judith Herman (1982) describes as the central dialectic of trauma. It constitutes a protective wall between survivors and the outside world, shields individuals within the collective and thereby has a reinforcing and ultimately trauma-protective effect.

### *Uncertainty*

Following their release from detention, Anfal survivors were controlled by and dependent on the perpetrators; they received no information whatsoever about their missing relatives, even after the Germyan region had come under Kurdish control in 1991. Anfal women lived in a permanent state of mourning, oscillating incessantly between hope and despair. Suffering from complicated and prolonged grief, they also lacked social rituals to express their anguish and graves where they could mourn their dead. The development of new life plans was accompanied by feelings of guilt and betrayal towards the missing. Anfal women seemed to be congealed in time. As such they shared the psychological symptoms of prolonged grief with relatives of the disappeared in other cultural, social and political contexts.

*Economic and social conditions in the aftermath of Anfal*

For fifteen years after Anfal, women Anfal survivors were confronted with a series of social and economic constraints that restricted them in processing their traumatic experiences and reengaging with their present lives. The social and economic fabric of the Germyan area was damaged beyond repair, condemning these women to a life of abject poverty without the support of their parents' or husbands' kin, absorbed by the daily struggle to keep themselves and their children alive. The patriarchal environment of Kurdish rural society, organized in patrilineal and patrilocal patterns, did not accommodate a life concept for women without male breadwinners or protectors. The legal and social status of Anfal women remained vague; although they lacked the provision and protection of their disappeared male relatives, they were still expected to defend the latter's honour. Although legally possible, remarriage was out of the question for most women: they continued to harbour expectations of their husbands' return and saw new relationships as betrayal. They furthermore feared the loss of their children and the social stigma attendant on remarriage. Hence, most Anfal women either lived alone with their children or in precarious, conflict-ridden family constellations with members of their parental families or in-laws, unloved and often considered an economic burden.

Anfal women were regarded as »women at risk« by their social environment. Their experience of violence and the assumed sexual violence they were subjected to turned against them as a social stigma. They were considered a challenge to traditional concepts of honour. If they went out to work, they were suspected of indecent behaviour or prostitution. Not only did they lack protection from the frequent violence and sexual assaults they encountered in the course of their work as day labourers or their smuggling activities across the Iraqi frontline; they were also held responsible for their plight and blamed for taking risks. When they allegedly violated the code of honour, they were sanctioned by the male

relatives of their disappeared husbands or their parental families. This dilemma left Anfal women in a constant state of inner strife between social expectations and traditional gender values, on the one hand, and the need to earn a living, on the other. Anfal women were expected to grieve and to mourn; their lives were conceptualized as joyless and void of happiness owing to the loss of their husbands and male relatives.

Their social radius was highly restricted; apart from funerals, they rarely participated in social events. The pain and the losses they suffered or witnessed in the wake of Anfal were perceived as confirmation of their own lives as an ordeal without end. This notwithstanding, funerals served as social forums for the ritual expression of their unclosable grief.

*Interaction between psychological distress  
and social and economic conditions*

Anfal women's psychological suffering interacted with and was exacerbated by a web of socio-economic constraints and expectations that confined them to the only role considered socially acceptable, i.e. one of passivity, of waiting and of mourning. Anfal women and society alike perceived the disappearance of their male relatives as the principal cause of their suffering, an interpretation that sidelined their own harrowing encounters with violence. The women had internalized gender and social norms to the point of regarding their lives as lost, as having disappeared with the missing.

The internal paralysis that had seized hold of Anfal women was perpetuated by social interdictions of mobility, blocking the development of new life plans and initiatives. Up until 2003, Anfal women refused to return to their villages, to commit to long-term income-generating or educational projects or to respond to offers of psychosocial assistance. They were stuck in a mind set exclusively oriented towards the return of their male relatives and to relief coming from the Kurdistan Regional Government and international aid organizations.

*Political and social responses to Anfal women's plight*

The Kurdish political elite's focus on the struggle for autonomy and the internal party war over local power and resources that started in 1995 formed the backdrop to its striking lack of consideration and aid for the survivors of Anfal. Construed as a national trauma and a symbol of the Kurdish tragedy, however, Anfal became an important argument in the struggle for international protection. This national narrative portrays Anfal women as grieving mothers and wives, further semantizing their position as passive victims. Their testimonies did not find their way into public discourse, but were instead often devalued and carefully avoided. In the eyes of the political elite, tackling such sensitive issues as the role of Kurdish collaborators during Anfal and the failure of the major political parties to protect civilians would have endangered the fragile autonomy of Iraqi Kurdistan. In Kurdish societal discourse, the narrative of defenceless Anfal women was reproduced, for the most part, by civil society and women's rights groups, whose principal demand in the 1990s was a decree allowing Anfal women to remarry. This in turn displayed such interest groups' lack of empathy with Anfal women and with the reality of their lives. Local professional approaches were marked by scant expertise in the dialectic of trauma and by the desire to dispose of this millstone with »cheer-up« phrases or by delegating the predicament to international aid organizations.

Bound by an ambivalent international policy towards the Kurdish region, international aid organizations were compelled to focus on short-term emergency programmes and rural rehabilitation, which left little room to develop social initiatives. Moreover, specific approaches to populations that had gone through massive trauma had not yet been introduced at the beginning of the 1990s; hardware development assistance was the order of the day.

### *Anfal women's bitterness and anger*

The denial of assistance and political recognition to Anfal women in the 1990s added insult to injury and reinforced their sense of marginalization, which in turn led to rivalry with other groups of victims. Apart from bitterness and resignation, their narrations showed evidence of latent anger.

### *Political instability*

Also prominent, however, was their overriding fear of the perpetrator Baath regime, which still held sway. The political instability of the Kurdish region, the relentless presence of the perpetrators and the internal party war that led to new victims and another exodus further destabilized the already precarious situation of Anfal women.

### *Trauma*

Most of the women showed symptoms that clearly qualify for a diagnosis of trauma. Their condition, however, cannot be understood purely from the perspective of individual psychology. To understand the dynamic and dimensions of Anfal women's suffering, the interaction between their individual pain and the multiple economic, social and political factors that prolonged it and prevented them from developing plans for the future, has to be taken into account. This socio-political approach should by no means mitigate the immense individual pain and sense of marginalization these women suffered all through the 1990s. Many of them became gravely ill; others showed signs of serious mental disturbance and bewilderment; others literally died of grief without ever having received recognition or assistance.

With hindsight, I often ask myself if we could have done more to reduce Anfal women's distress by offering them individual assistance and psychotherapeutic help. The focus of

our assistance programmes at the time was on vast and sustainable rural rehabilitation projects, rather than on individual short-term help. Could we have saved Mahsum's life by simply building a house for her? – in economic terms a tiny project activity, but one that was at odds with our »sustainability« perspective. Could we have eased Anfal women's grief by providing individual psychotherapeutic assistance? As mentioned above, trauma care was not on our agenda at that time. I doubt, however, whether psychological or psychotherapeutic offers would have been accepted by Anfal women, who at the time were living in the midst of poverty and absorbed by their daily struggle for survival.

Today's – at times vociferous – retrospective criticism of the lack or inadequacy of the assistance given to Anfal survivors in the 1990s tends, however, to disregard the overall framework that prevailed. The paralysis of Anfal women in the 1990s reflected a broader, all-embracing sense of agony that pervaded Iraqi Kurdistan at that time.

### *Anfal women's strengths and resources*

Despite multiple constraints, Anfal women survived and, with an incredible display of courage and energy, managed to bring up their children. Some drew strength from their religious faith, some from their family support systems. Others were sustained by their political engagement, which gave some kind of meaning to their experience. Their collective structure, however, proved to be their most powerful resource: the women created informal networks, supported each other in the face of society's imputations of immorality and constructed a collective narrative that shielded them from all-too-painful individual memories and confrontation. This collective structure gave them the possibility to stick to the past while drawing strength from each other when new perspectives were hampered by external factors beyond their control, and – as I will show in the following – helped them

to deal with the radical political and social change that was yet to come.

For more than fifteen years after Anfal, however, Anfal women's strength and will to survive were suffocated by a net of political, socio-economic constraints and contained by traditional gender roles. Absorbed in an exhausting struggle for survival and torn between victimhood and agency, Anfal women felt that their own lives were suspended. Up to 2003, their hopes for a change were exclusively directed towards a future return of their disappeared (male) relatives.

## **12 Anfal women after 2003 - political transition**

### **12.1 Anfal women's desire for truth - the mass graves and the process of evidence**

The fall of the Baath regime in April 2003 marked a dramatic change in the lives of Anfal women. Like the majority of the Iraqi Kurdish population, they enthusiastically welcomed the US-led invasion of Iraq and the long-desired toppling of Saddam Hussein's Baath regime. Suhaila (2012) remembers:

The day when Baghdad fell, everybody in Sumud was out on the streets - and us amongst them! Everybody went out and danced; people threw their arms like this (she throws her arm in the air). The streets were full of people; they were shooting for joy.

The regime's fall restored a sense of physical safety from the aggressor for the first time in decades. At the same time, with rekindled hopes for the return of their disappeared relatives, it threw women Anfal survivors into a state of agitation and excitement. Faima was in her home village when she heard the news of Saddam Hussein's downfall:

I was happy, I thought maybe they'll come back now. Maybe my husband will come back now. I was full of hope (Faima, 2011).

Rabea (2012) recalls:

The day Saddam fell, many celebrated. But I did not feel like celebrating. My heart was heavy. I thought, maybe now they will

come home. All those years, I had kept some of my husband's clothes. I washed them....

Habsa (2011) describes the emotional roller-coaster of those days:

The day, Saddam fell ... oi oi oi, we were all out on the streets. We rented a car and went off - to Sulaimania, to Chamchamal, then to Kirkuk and then as far as Baghdad to see our relatives. We saw the buildings that had been hit by the bombs. We went into some buildings; we went into the Baath security building. We picked up some sheets of paper from the ground and took them as souvenirs. When I think about it today, I think, how did we dare to do so? Me in my Kurdish clothes - as you see me here now - we just went everywhere (...), A few days after Saddam's downfall, I went to the market to buy carpets. Suhaila said to me, »Nakba«, you are crazy! You better save the money and give it to your children; they can make better use of it.« But I said, »No, the house has to be nice when they come back, they have to sit comfortably on beautiful new carpets.« And I bought them.

The women's statements show once again the intensity and concreteness of their hope for the return of their relatives fifteen years after their disappearance. Their budding optimism, however, faded from day to day.

During the first few months after the overthrow of the Baath regime, every day brought new evidence of its crimes and atrocities. A wealth of documents found in government and police buildings confirmed the abduction, disappearance, torture and execution of political opponents of the Baath regime. Graveyards with thousands of political prisoners who had been executed were discovered at prison sites, police stations and secret service offices. By February 2004, more than 259 mass graves had been identified throughout Iraq (Human Rights Watch, 2004, p. 22). Some gravesites were pointed out by neighbouring communities; others by shovel drivers who had originally dug them; others again were identified through satellite image analysis. Estimations of the number of dead discovered in mass graves range

between 250,000 and one million.<sup>158</sup> Kurds abducted during the operations against the Barzani tribe in 1983, the Anfal Campaign in 1988 and other military operations in northern Iraq; Shia deported from the marsh regions or missing since the massacre of the Shia in southern Iraq in 1991; abducted members of political groups opposed to the Baath regime, as well as Assyrian Christian, Turkmen and Yezidi communities; Iranian and Kuwaiti soldiers captured and killed in the Iran-Iraq War and during the invasion of Kuwait in 1991 – an ethnic and political kaleidoscope of the multi-layered violence of the Baath regime.

Indeed, in the immediate aftermath of the Baath regime's demise, relatives of missing persons from all regions of Iraq rushed to former police stations, detention centres and mass gravesites in the hope of gleaning information. While the dead in graveyards near police stations, detention centres and security offices were identified by name and origin because graves were marked and documents available, the situation at the unmarked mass gravesites was another matter. Only a small number of gravesites were secured by the coalition forces. People set about unearthing dead bodies without professional assistance. In two mass graves near the military base of al-Mahawil close to the city of Hillah, local people and ad hoc committees dug up the gravesites with backhoes and their bare hands. Some 2,000 sets of skeletons were dug up; relatives commingled the remains and carried them away in plastic bags or wheelbarrows. Much reliable evidence was irretrievably lost (Human Rights Watch, 2003b).<sup>159</sup>

**158** See International Commission of Missing Persons, <http://www.icmp.org/icmp-worldwide/middle-east/iraq> (last accessed 23 Nov. 2012).

**159** Human Rights Watch criticized the US authorities for failing to secure the gravesites: »U.S. forces have explained this failure by asserting that any efforts to halt diggings at mass graves of victims of massacres would thwart the understandable determination of desperate relatives to confirm the fate of missing loved ones, and would thereby risk causing serious disturbances. Yet, despite the fact that U.S. authorities had every reason to anticipate that this would be a pressing matter, based on what was known

The handling of Baath regime documents was similarly disorganized. In the days and weeks after the invasion, several tons of documents were found in public buildings, military and police stations and at the offices of the Baath Party and their intelligence services. »Nine linear miles of files« were reportedly seized by the coalition forces (Stover et al., 2005, p. 837) and brought to Qatar for investigation by US agencies (Human Rights Watch, 2004). Kurdish *peshmerga* forces, Shia and Kurdish political parties and the Iraqi Communist Party systematically looked for documents, and have held a mass of files in their custody ever since.<sup>160</sup> Other documents fell into the hands of individuals in the course of the widespread looting of government buildings and of the private houses of Baath officials. Much of the evidence was destroyed. It was not uncommon for state documents to be bartered and sold on the streets, including sensitive data on

about Iraqi repression and the experience in other post-conflict situations, they made no serious effort to enlist local authorities to undertake jointly an effective public information campaign that would stress the value of professional exhumation as a way of positively identifying the victims as well as preserving evidence of crimes. The overwhelming emotional need of Iraqis to recover and restore dignity to their dead can be met by means more satisfactory than plowing through killing fields with backhoes« (Human Rights Watch, 2003b, p. 2).

**160** In the Kurdish region, documents remained in the custody of several, often competing actors: PUK and KDP party officials, the respective party intelligence services and the Human Rights Ministries of the two then separate Kurdish administrations. Some were said to be highly confidential, obviously containing »sensitive« information on Kurds who had collaborated with the regime; others were said to have been »exchanged« by political parties. Several roomfuls of Anfal-related documents were stored at the PUK-led Human Rights Ministry Office in Sulaimania and used for pension purposes or as a source of information for relatives. There seemed to be no visible system of managing the documents (my own observations in August 2003 and April 2004; interviews with Salah Rasheed, the then PUK Minister for Human Rights, Omar Fatah, head of the PUK intelligence service, and other PUK officials; and Mohammed Ihsan, the then KDP Human Rights Minister. See also Human Rights Watch (2004).

perpetrators and informers (Human Rights Watch 2004).<sup>161</sup> Local initiatives for the purpose of finding and evaluating documentary evidence mushroomed. The largest of these was the Association of Free Prisoners (AFP), which was founded by former detainees in Baghdad and had several branches throughout Iraq, including Iraqi Kurdistan. I had occasion to visit the AFP committee in Baghdad in the immediate aftermath of the invasion in August 2003. The committee's two-storey building near the banks of the Tigris was stacked with documents from the cellar to the roof, some in potato sacks, others merely lying around. The Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) donated several personal computers to the committee and some stationery. The committee did its best to handle the crowds of people who came daily in the hope of gaining information about their missing relatives. Although the committee stated that perpetrator data would not be handed over, controlling access to documents was nigh to impossible. In the AFP's branch in Sulaimania, which occupied two rooms in the former secret service building at the time, it was easy for me and other visitors to garner details of prisoners' backgrounds and dates of execution, as well as the names of decision-makers and informants.<sup>162</sup> Here too, scores of families came to the committee each day in search of certainty. Those who found their relatives on the list were given wooden coffins and informed of the exact location of the grave. I frequently witnessed emotional breakdowns when survivors had received evidence of the death of their loved ones after years of waiting for their return. It was at this moment that my colleagues from HAUKARI and I began

**161** It can be assumed that this »wild« circulation of sensitive perpetrator data also contributed to the many revenge killings of Baath officials reported by the media and human rights organizations in 2003 and 2004 (see Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 2004).

**162** Particularly shocking were the itemized facts on the active participation of physicians at executions: in numerous cases they had deliberately scaled up the age of adolescent or even infant prisoners so that their execution would appear legal (see Winter, 2003).

to think about setting up a counselling centre that would offer psychological support to the relatives of missing persons and be of solace to them during the process of acquiring evidence and receiving the remains of their relatives (see Chapter 12.3).

Several institutions competed to take a lead in the process of organizing evidence and centralizing the documents in one hand. One of them was the Iraqi Memory Foundation founded by Kanan Makiya, an Iraqi exile living in the United States and a close advisor to the US administration, who drew on previous expertise in evaluating Baath documents in the Iraqi Documentation and Research Project at Harvard University.<sup>163</sup> Being founded by Iraqis in exile and funded by the US government, the foundation lacked, however, credibility and access on the ground.<sup>164</sup> In the summer of 2003, the CPA announced the establishment of a National Bureau of Missing Persons, to be managed initially by the CPA and subsequently handed over to the Iraqi government. In December 2003, the Iraqi Government Council authorized the Iraqi Human Rights Ministry as the central body for handling documentary evidence. In light of the atmosphere of suspicion and the increasing conflict between the political and regional factions in Iraq, however, neither regional nor local political actors were willing to hand over sensitive documentary evidence to the national government and thus

**163** See [http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects\\_new/irdp/irdpindex.html](http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects_new/irdp/irdpindex.html) (last access 20 Dec. 2012). The IRDP was in possession of countless documents on the Anfal Campaign and other aggressive acts against Kurds, all of which had been seized by Kurdish *peshmerga* from Iraqi police stations during the uprising in 1991. They were shipped to the USA and handed over to the IRDP. The groundbreaking book *Genocide in Iraq* by Human Rights Watch (HRW, 1993) was based on these documents.

**164** I met Kanan Makiya and his colleagues both in Germany, when they were lobbying for funds and support for their foundation, and in Iraq, when they were trying to link with the Kurdistan Regional Government and local human rights organizations in Kurdistan-Iraq and could personally observe the mutual mistrust between the Iraqi Memory Foundation and its Kurdish counterparts.

abandon control of its evaluation, interpretation and political use. The result is that, to this day, a plethora of documents referring to the Baath regime and its multiple crimes are scattered throughout the country in the hands of many different actors (Mlodoch, 2003).

International organizations severely criticized the CPA for the chaotic situation at mass gravesites and for failing to secure forensic and documentary evidence following the invasion. The disorganized process of handling evidence reflected, however, also the power with which long-repressed suffering surfaced in the immediate aftermath of the Baath regime's fall and the desperation behind the search of thousands of relatives of missing persons for certainty. The image of relatives of missing persons rushing to mass gravesites and black-veiled women wandering around in ghostly landscapes of unburied skeletons became the emblem of the discovery of the Baath regime's atrocities in the aftermath of the invasion.

Several years later, a woman Anfal survivor from Sumud, Shazada Hussein Mohammed, would embody this image when she happened to play the leading role in the award-winning Iraqi film *Son of Babylon* (al-Daraji, 2006). The film tells the story of a Kurdish woman and her grandson who journey through war-torn Iraq after the US-led invasion of 2003 in search of the boy's father, her son, who had been missing since 1991. They make their way to Baghdad, various detention centres near Hilla and the mass gravesites of Najaf in southern Iraq. Although their search remains fruitless, they meet relatives of the disappeared from other regions in Iraq whose language they do not share, but whose fate and suffering resembles their own. I will refer to the film's reconciliatory message later on. With impressive images, *Son of Babylon* conveys the anguish experienced by relatives of the missing, and the oscillation between hope and despair they went through in their desperate search for evidence in the immediate aftermath of the regime's overthrow.

In reality, however, very few Anfal women from Sumud/Rizgary and the Germyan region actually undertook this odyssey to the mass gravesites. Apart from a few women who were taken by their sons, most of them were restricted in their mobility, like Rabea (2012).

*Qu: Did you visit the mass graves?*

No, but some women here went to Nugra Salman. I heard that they were taken to Nugra Salman. But they did not tell me. They should have told me, I wanted to go there (...) I wanted to see the place where my brother's bones are. The site of my father and mother's suffering. That's why I wanted to go there.

*Qu.: Don't you think it would have been very hard for you?*

Yes, but I wanted to see it. Up to then I was still hoping the Anfals would come back. I always believed it, always hoped. But when I saw the pictures of all those mass graves - that's when I stopped waiting.

And Hataw (2012) remembers:

I would have liked to travel to Nugra Salman. I would have liked to spit on Saddam's picture, but how could I go? Look at us today. We have support to travel within the memorial project - but if not, how could we manage even to go to Erbil? Somebody has to take us.

However, all women anxiously followed television reports of newly discovered mass graves. Each new grave contributed to the growing certainty that their husbands would never return. Habsa's daughter Halala (2011) recalls the first days after Saddam Hussein's fall:

We went to Kirkuk and were so happy ... so very happy ... But then the dark days came. We thought our father and brother would now return. We bought food, we cleaned the house; my mother went to buy new carpets. And then I met my aunt in the market. She had seen something in TV about mass graves. She said to me, go home quickly, and take care that your mother won't see these TV images. But when I arrived home the images were on all TV channels already, all the mass gravesites, all tho-

se horrible pictures. The atmosphere in our house was so terrible ... all of us were desperate, all of us cried. My father's sister, my aunt, broke down completely. Her daughter phoned and said, »I will bring her to your house, so that she will be among people and recover«. But when she came, she got worse, because we were all so desperate ourselves. All this was awful.

### *The horror of the mass graves*

After the al-Mahawil experience, the CPA Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance set up a Mass Grave Action Plan in the summer of 2003 to secure mass gravesites, bring international forensic teams to Iraq, train local forensic professionals and launch awareness campaigns to prevent the population from disintering the bodies and thus preserve the gravesites as future evidence (Stover et al., 2005). Gravesites were divided into three categories: those to be investigated by international forensic teams in the interests of collecting evidence for future trials; those to be examined by Iraqi teams in order to classify the corpses according to specific regions and acts of violence, and those to be handed over to local groups and communities for exhumation and reburial (Human Rights Watch, 2004).

Yet the volatile security environment, new violence and the political struggle for ownership of the exhumation process delayed the opening of mass graves. Iraq lacked technical equipment and forensic expertise. The CPA appealed to governments around the world to send forensic teams and provide equipment for DNA analysis, which was both costly and elaborate. The response was tentative, partly due to political controversy over the US-led »go-it-alone run« to Iraq and partly due to worsening security. The International Red Cross, which had given professional support and training to local initiatives involved in mass grave exhumations, withdrew from Iraq after the devastating bomb attack on its headquarters in Baghdad in late October 2003 (*Reuters*,

12 Oct. 2003; de Torrente, 2004). Dutch and Finnish forensic teams withdrew in early 2004 as a result of poor security and the attacks on mass grave exhumation sites in southern Iraq.

When the CPA handed over political authority to the Iraqi Transitional Government in June 2004, the technical and professional conditions and procedures for DNA analysis of exhumed bodies were not in place. At the same time, there was considerable pressure on the Transitional Government to present solid evidence at the forthcoming Iraqi Special Tribunal (IST) on Saddam Hussein and other defendants. For this purpose, in the autumn of 2004 a number of mass gravesites near the village of al-Hathra<sup>165</sup> to the west of the city of Mossul were speedily examined by a team of US archaeologists and engineers, under the leadership of the US »Regime Crimes Liaison Office« (RCLO) and secured by the US military.<sup>166</sup> The corpses of some three hundred Kurdish women and children, Anfal victims from the valley of Jafayeti, were exhumed; between fifteen and twenty per cent were identified through identity documents on their person. The victims' relatives were notified by military personnel or members of the Iraqi Special Tribunal. In an interview I conducted in May 2005 with Kurdistan Daloye, the representative of the Iraqi Special Tribunal in the Kurdish region at the time, she described the intensity of the relatives' shock and desperation when they received the death notice, even though after a period of more than twenty years. There was no provision for social or psychological care for the relatives to accompany the death notification.<sup>167</sup> Another three years passed before the remains of the victims from al-Hathra were buried in Dukan close to their home villages. It was

**165** The site is spelled »Hazzar« in several government notifications and publications.

**166** See: »Investigators unearth clues to convict Saddam«. *Reuters*, Tues. October 12, 2004 05:20 PM ET; <http://old.krg.org/docs/articles/reuters-mass-grave-found-hatra-oct04.a> (last accessed 1 March 2012).

**167** Interview with Kurdistan Daloye in Sulaimania, March 2005.

the first official burial ceremony of Anfal victims in the Kurdistan region.<sup>168</sup>

Very few mass graves were investigated in subsequent years. Apart from technical and security difficulties, ownership of the process remained a source of disagreement. International human rights organizations criticized the US domination of and bias in the process of exhumation. In the light of growing political conflict in Iraq, Kurdish and Shia political groups refused to accept the leading role played by the Iraqi Human Rights Ministry and demanded control of the graves containing Kurdish and Shia victims. Kurdish documentation teams set up by the Kurdish Human Rights Ministry in Erbil travelled through southern Iraq in search of evidence. They found, exhumed and brought home approximately 530 bodies of men and boys from the Barzani tribe, who had been abducted by the Baath regime in 1983.<sup>169</sup>

To this day, only a small portion of the approximately three hundred mass graves identified in Iraq has actually been opened and thoroughly examined. Of the exhumations carried out so far, only victims found with personal documents have been identified. Most victims were classified by their regions of origin or categories of violence and then buried without individual identification. Hence, to this day the overwhelming majority of Anfal survivors remain unenlightened about the personal fate of their loved ones. Given the vast number of mass gravesites and victims, and in light of the experience of mass grave exhumations in Rwanda and

**168** See »A homecoming of great sorrow for the Kurds«. *Los Angeles Times*, 18 Jan. 2008; Mourners gather at a hilltop cemetery as 365 coffins arrive bearing the remains of those killed in Hussein's genocidal 1988 campaign. Al Iraqi: <http://www.aliraqi.org/forums/showthread.php?t=82566> (last accessed 1 April 2013).

**169** Gwynne Roberts' documentary film *Saddam's road to hell* (2006) follows the Minister of Human Rights of the Kurdish region, Mohammed Ihsan, personally undertaking an adventurous and quasi clandestine journey to mass graves in Southern Iraq - a stunning document on the chaos of the period and the unprofessional dealings with the mass graves.

former Yugoslavia, it can be assumed that the process of opening mass graves in Iraq and the attendant forensic examinations will take decades. Moreover, much of the evidence was destroyed in the first few months after the invasion. Identifying each victim individually seems a sheer impossibility, and it is likely that the great longing of the relatives of missing persons for truth and evidence on their loved ones' fate will remain unaddressed.

*The burial of 187 Anfal victims in Sumud/Rizgary in 2009*

In October 2008, two mass graves near the city of Najaf in the predominantly Shia south of Iraq were exhumed by the Iraqi Human Rights Ministry and the local Shia al-Mihrab Martyr Foundation<sup>170</sup>. The victims in one of the graves had been killed during the Shia uprising in 1991; the second grave contained 187 Anfal victims from the southern Germyan region; only four of them could be identified by name. The Shia administration and the Martyr Foundation suggested burying the Kurdish victims alongside the Shia victims in Najaf as a symbol of the common suffering of Kurdish and Shia Iraqis. The Kurdistan Regional Government, however, insisted on the return of the bodies to Kurdistan, thereby honouring the wishes of the victims' relatives to bury them at home.<sup>171</sup> Hence, on 14 April 2009, 187 Anfal victims were buried in Sumud/Rizgary. The bodies had been previously transferred from Najaf to the Kurdish capital Erbil in November 2008. Anfal women from Germyan, among them Su-

**170** The Foundation is a charity organization affiliated to the Shia Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq party.

**171** See Kurdistan Regional President Massud Barzani's speech upon the arrival of the corpses in Iraqi Kurdistan on 21 November 2008: <http://www.krg.org/articles/detail.asp?smap=02010100&lngnr=12&asnr=&anr=26649&nr=223> (last accessed 1 April 2013).

haila and Habsa, attended the solemn reception at the airport. Habsa (2011) remembers the day:

Oh, I wandered around in midst of the coffins. I was completely beside myself ... totally beside myself... I was looking for my husband, my son ... I cried. Other women loudly lamented; they demanded that the dead should be brought home, to Germyan. I could not demand anything. I just cried and I didn't see anything else.

Five months later - coinciding with the twenty-first anniversary of Anfal on 14 April 2009 - the bodies were transferred from Erbil to Sumud/Rizgary in a three-day ceremony. A procession of 187 open cars transported the coffins, which were covered in flowers and draped with Kurdistan flags. The leading vehicle contained a coffin with the remains of a woman and her unborn child. Starting in Erbil, the cortège passed through numerous Kurdish cities including Sulaimania, where crowds lined the streets to pay their last respects to the victims.<sup>172</sup> On arrival in Kalar in Germyan, the situation became highly disorganized. People from all over the Germyan region had come to attend the funeral. Vast crowds lined the streets. The men in the crowd put their hands on their hearts as a gesture of respect; most women were dressed in black, wailing and loudly lamenting. Many ran alongside the vehicles and tried to get close to the coffins, to touch and to kiss them. It took five hours for the procession to cover the ten kilometres from Kalar to the burial ground on a small hill on the outskirts of Sumud/Rizgary, which was at that time merely a large sandy space. Here the coffins were arranged in rows and safeguarded by the police. A small area was cordoned off for prominent guests, such as Hero Ibrahim Ahmed, wife of the Iraqi President, and representatives of the Kurdistan Regional Parliament.

**172** All observations from personal attendance at the procession in Sulaimania on 13 April and the burial ceremony in Sumud/Rizgary on 14 April 2009.

These logistical measures notwithstanding, scores of relatives in a state of tumult began throwing themselves onto the coffins, drowning the politicians' speeches with sounds of grief across the site. It was indescribable chaos. The people's grief mingled with anger. Many would later say that the government had done nothing to ensure a dignified ceremony. They were disappointed at the absence of both prominent political leaders, Massud Barzani and Jalal Talabani; the Iraqi Prime Minister had sent a delegate only; and even the very Minister of Martyrs and Anfal Affairs of the Kurdistan region was absent. A series of demonstrations by Anfal survivors took place around the burial, expressing their disappointment and demanding assistance and recognition and the punishment of Kurdish collaborators (see Chapter 15).

A bizarre scene took place in the afternoon after the burial ceremony: when the mourners began to leave the cemetery, a backhoe loader set about covering the fresh graves with mud. Several Anfal women were still sitting beside the graves, crying and singing songs of lamentation. When they saw the backhoe approaching, they screamed at the driver: »Go away. Our relatives were buried by backhoes; we don't want a backhoe to cover them now. We'll do it with our own bare hands.« At a meeting several days later, they said they were incensed by the government's lack of sensitivity at sending a backhoe loader to the ceremony. They saw it as a metaphor for the atrocities of Anfal, one that triggered intrusive images of their relatives being buried with sand and dirt.

Many women would later describe the day of the burial as a »second Anfal«. »I cried for three days afterwards,« said Faima (2011), and Amira (2011) said: »It caused me so much pain, that I fell ill for three days afterwards.« They were overwhelmed by their grief on the day of the ceremony and on the day after still had no certainty about their loved ones' fate.

*Persistent uncertainty*

The end of hope for the return of their relatives coupled with the lack of individual certainty about their fate threw many Anfal women into deeper depression than ever before. Pictures of mass gravesites with endless rows of skeletons and scattered bundles of Kurdish clothes and children's toys add to the images that haunt them. The recurring expressions of uncertainty dominating their narratives in the 1990s, have now been replaced by haunting images like »they were thrown in the dust; they were buried in the dirt; backhoes have covered them with sand«. In 2011, Faima declared:

I can't sleep at night. My heart is racing. I think about what they did to them; I imagine the backhoes covering their bodies, how they dug out the sand ... If your husband had disappeared and you didn't know where he was, wouldn't you think about it all the time?

The mass grave pictures are shown at recurring intervals on Kurdish television with the intention of highlighting what the Kurdish people have suffered. There is little evidence of sensitivity about the paralyzing impact these images have on the survivors. Nor is there any sign of a critical debate on the topic.

The 3rd International Conference on Mass Graves, organized by the Ministry of Martyrs and Anfal Affairs in April 2011 in Erbil, opened with a film that showed images of skeletons, close-ups of skulls with gunshot wounds and bundles of children and women's clothes strewn across the dirt. Some of the international guests criticized the exclusive use of horrific images, which they saw as violating the dignity of the victims, but also as alienating rather than engaging the viewers. The organizers countered that only when the truth was revealed would those in denial of the genocide against the Kurds in Iraq be proven wrong (the author's observations, April 2011).

## **12.2 Anfal women's desire for justice - first steps in the field of »transitional justice«**

### *The desire for justice*

Apart from their yearning for clarity, Anfal women's narrations in the 1990s testified to a strong desire for justice. They were convinced that the collapse of the Baath regime would herald the justice that had been eluded them for so long. Their idea of justice was emotionally driven by a sense of hatred and revenge, and focused on the accountability and punishment of the perpetrators.

In 2002, a few months before Saddam Hussein's demise, Payman (2002) said:

In the name of all Anfal women, we demand that someone look for the Anfals. That Saddam be taken away, that God take revenge on him in our name and cut him to small pieces, that he assert the rights of all our children, who were eaten by black dogs in Nugra Salman.

### *The CPA approach to transitional justice*

The women's retributive idea of justice largely met with the transitional justice approach adopted by the US government and the Iraqi Transitional Government.

In the immediate aftermath of the regime's overthrow, there was an intense debate on various concepts of transitional justice to be adopted, pushed forward by the CPA and the Iraqi Government Council and with the participation of the United Nations, international organizations and local victims' groups. The challenge was immense. Hundreds of thousands of victims of the Baath regime pressed for rapid processing of the evidence, for truth and for justice; on the other hand, one of the Baath regime's strongest weapons had been its ability to render millions of Iraqis accessory to its reign of terror. Hence the principal challenge was to find

a method of punishing the perpetrators without stigmatizing large sections of the Iraqi population, which in turn would have led to further destabilization of the country.

Prior to the regime's collapse, the Kurdish and Shia dominated Conference of the Iraqi Opposition (2002) had laid down their ideas on transitional justice in the paper »Transition to Democracy«. <sup>173</sup> They had favoured a domestic rather than international tribunal for the trial of the leading figures of the regime, the complete dismantling of the Baath Party and an extensive lustration process for its senior members. However, alongside these retributive measures they had also suggested truth and reconciliation commissions and an amnesty-for-truth model as in South Africa for dealing with perpetrators of minor responsibilities and recommended refraining from »collective punishment«. Finally, they had argued for generous compensation of the victims of past crimes as a sign of recognition and of encouragement to actively engage in the process of political transition.

However, after the military invasion, the coalition forces and the CPA were under considerable pressure to fulfil their promises for justices, and when Paul Bremer took the lead of the CPA in April 2003, he adopted a »press on regardless« strategy. Drawing a rather simplistic comparison with Germany in 1945, he set an extensive de-Baathification process in motion in the public and security sectors and immediately prepared a tribunal for the prosecution of fifty-five leading representatives of the Baath regime, including the then fugitive Saddam Hussein. Rather than searching for more inclusive solutions, he settled for a retributive model of transitional justice, which was largely driven by the victim group perspective. Options for truth and reconciliation commissions as discussed previously were simply deferred.

**173** The paper gave an overall view of the opposition's ideas on the political framework for the transition of Iraq to a federal and democratic state. Transitional justice was treated in the third section of the paper.

*The de-Baathification process*

The first decision taken by the CPA was to introduce de-Baathification laws 1 and 2 in May 2003. Order No. 1<sup>174</sup> outlawed the Baath Party and dismissed some 30,000 senior party members in the three senior ranks in government institutions and public services (including the education and health sector). Their removal was effected immediately and based exclusively on party membership, without positive proof of individual responsibility for human rights violations or crimes (Bajalan, 2008). Order No. 2<sup>175</sup> dissolved the 500,000-strong Iraqi Army, the intelligence services and other institutions such as the Olympic Committee presided over by Saddam Hussein's son, Uday Hussein. Order No. 4<sup>176</sup> saw the confiscation of all Baath Party properties and assets and the dissolution of financial obligations, while Order No. 5<sup>177</sup> installed the Higher National De-Baathification Council (HNDC) to oversee implementation of these laws.

With these de-Baathification laws, the Iraqi army and most of the security forces were disbanded overnight and thousands of Baath Party members removed from the public, administrative, health and educational sectors. Ahmed

**174** Coalition Provisional Authority Order No.1 De-Baathification of Iraqi Society. CPA/ORD/16 May 2003/01: [http://www.iraqcoalition.org/regulations/20030516\\_CPAORD\\_1\\_DeBa\\_athification\\_of\\_Iraqi\\_Society\\_.pdf](http://www.iraqcoalition.org/regulations/20030516_CPAORD_1_DeBa_athification_of_Iraqi_Society_.pdf) (last accessed 21 Jan. 2012).

**175** Coalition Provisional Authority Order No. 2 Dissolution of Entities. (CPA/ORD/23 May 2003/02): [http://www.iraqcoalition.org/regulations/20030823\\_CPAORD\\_2\\_Dissolution\\_of\\_Entities\\_with\\_Annex\\_A.pdf](http://www.iraqcoalition.org/regulations/20030823_CPAORD_2_Dissolution_of_Entities_with_Annex_A.pdf) (last accessed 21 Jan. 2012).

**176** Coalition Provisional Authority Order No. 4 Management of Property and Assets of the Iraqi Baath Party. (CPA/ORD/25 May 2003/04): [http://www.iraqcoalition.org/regulations/20030525\\_CPAORD\\_4\\_Management\\_of\\_Property\\_and\\_Assets\\_of\\_the\\_Iraqi\\_Ba\\_ath\\_Party.pdf](http://www.iraqcoalition.org/regulations/20030525_CPAORD_4_Management_of_Property_and_Assets_of_the_Iraqi_Ba_ath_Party.pdf) (last accessed 21 Jan. 2012).

**177** Coalition Provisional Authority Order No. 5 Establishment of the Iraqi De-Baathification Council. (CPA/ORD/25 May 2003/05): <http://www.casi.org.uk/info/cpa/030525-CPA-Order-5.pdf> (last accessed 21 Jan. 2012).

Chalabi, former head of the Iraqi National Congress, close advisor to the US administration and the coalition forces and vigorous supporter of an extensive lustration process, was appointed head of the HNDC and given authority to assess the responsibilities of former Baathists and decide on the latter's petitions against their dismissal. He went on to use the de-Baathification process primarily as a political tool for revenge and to gain Shia access to positions of power.<sup>178</sup>

Since Sunni Arabs had constituted the majority of employees in the public and security sectors and were thus the most affected by the lustration process, they perceived the indiscriminate process of de-Baathification and its arbitrary implementation by Chalabi as collective punishment. Their sense of political marginalization was aggravated when, in July 2003, an Iraqi Interim Governing Council was set up along ethnic and religious lines with a Kurdish and Shia majority, which left Sunni Arab representatives with a minor role. The de-Baathification policy was pilloried in Iraq and internationally for having driven former Baath Party members and more generally Sunni Arabs into the hands of terrorist groups and thus fuelling sectarian violence in Iraq (International Crisis Group, 2004; Eisenstadt, 2010). It was also condemned for its shut-down of the public and security sectors in the crucial period of transition and its alienation of large numbers of Iraqi professionals and the intelligentsia from the reconstruction process (a common argument in debates on lustration processes in other contexts) (Bajalan, 2008). The Iraq Study Group appointed by the US Congress in 2006 for assessing the US strategy in Iraq in 2006 underlined the flaws in de-Baathification in its final paper, known as the Baker-Hamilton paper (Baker et al., 2006). In January 2008, the Iraqi Parliament passed the Law of the Supreme National Commission for Accountability and Justice,

**178** Kanan Makiya, himself one of the masterminds of de-Baathification, remarked once that under Chalabi, the de-Baathification process transformed into a »de-Sunnification process« (Rogg, 2010).

a result of the political pressure by Sunni Arab groups and the US governments' interest in finally ending the heated de-Baathification debate. The law maintained the general framework of earlier de-Baathification laws but revised its implementation: approximately ten thousand fourth-rank Baath Party members were re-employed; the others were now eligible for pensions. Procedures for the investigation, documentation and prosecution of individual crimes committed by deposed Baath Party members were introduced and an independent appeal mechanism installed. The new Accountability and Justice Commission was comprised of seven commissioners nominated by the Council of Ministers and approved by the Iraqi Parliament, which elected the chairman (Sissons, 2008). The Commission, however, was itself organized along sectarian lines, rendering de-Baathification a Shia-dominated »blunt weapon wielded by a small group of people to settle old scores and advance their own political fortunes« (Hiltermann, 2010). In January 2010, two months before the second Iraqi National Elections, the Commission banned nine Sunni Arab political parties and some five hundred candidates from the electoral process on the grounds that they were affiliated with or defended the Baath regime; this greatly undermined political attempts to engage Sunni Arab factions and populations in the electoral process (Ottaway & Kaysi, 2010; Rogg, 2010).

#### *Hunting down and arresting Baath regime criminals*

Prior to the invasion, one of the US government's »promises to the Iraqi people« had been to put Saddam Hussein and other key figures on trial for genocide and mass human rights violations in Iraq. Thus, to capture leading Baath Party, government and Revolutionary Council officials was a matter of top priority in the immediate aftermath of the invasion. The »deck of fifty-five«, a pack of playing cards bearing photographs of the Baath regime's inner-circle officials, was circulated throughout Iraq. Printed by the US military

to help troops identify the most-wanted Iraqis, they were a must-have historical trophy for every Kurd and – presumably – other Iraqis as well.<sup>179</sup> Saddam Hussein's sons, Uday and Qusay, and his fourteen-year-old grandson were killed in a gunfight with US troops near the city of Mossul in August 2003; images of their disfigured bodies were given ample coverage on television. Saddam Hussein, at that time on the run, repeatedly sent audio messages appealing to the Iraqi people to rise up against the occupation. On 13 December 2003, Hussein was finally captured by US troops and Kurdish *peshmerga* fighters in a hole in the ground near Tikrit, his hometown. Images of the ex-dictator being examined by a US Army doctor were seen on television worldwide.

Forty-five of the fifty-five »most wanted« persons were captured between 2003 and 2005; three died in custody, four were sentenced to death and executed; thirty-seven are still in detention; Uday and Qusay Hussein were killed; Mrs Huda Ammash has been released.

While international human rights organizations expressed concern at the »victor's justice« approach of the coalition forces and the prevailing climate of vindictiveness, Anfal survivors' regard for the treatment of prisoners in accordance with international human rights standards was lukewarm. The CPA's vindictive approach coincided for the most part with their desire for punishment and revenge. In an interview in 2004, Roshna, then the twenty-five-year-old daughter of an Anfal woman, compared her family's fate to that of Saddam Hussein:

This (she refers to the Anfal events) happened at a time when I should have gone to school, when my father and mother should have taken care of me. But then all this happened and our lives turned upside down. Now we have no future. All of them, my fa-

**179** In the pack of cards, Saddam Hussein is the ace of spades, his sons, Uday and Qusay are the ace of clubs and ace of hearts, while Saddam's presidential secretary, al-Tikriti, is the ace of diamonds. The only woman in the pack is the scientist Huda Salih Mahdi Ammash.

ther, his cousin, my uncle, my mother's brother, they're all gone. There are no men left in our village (...) We want certainty whether they're alive or not. Then we want THEM to suffer as much as our fathers and brothers - and worse. Not like now ... now they're in prison. We heard that Saddam gets cigarettes and is well dressed. That's not prison. First you do the most terrible things to the world and then you get cigarettes, good meals and good suits as a prisoner. How is that possible? (Roshna, 2004)

And when speaking about her appearance at the Iraqi High Tribunal against Saddam Hussein, Hataw (2012) says:

I said, »Why does Saddam have lawyers? Why does everybody talk about human rights for Saddam? There were no human rights for us!«

### *The Iraqi High Tribunal*

Three days before Saddam Hussein was captured, the CPA introduced the Iraqi Special Tribunal under the authority of the Iraqi Governing Council.<sup>180</sup> The latter had set up a commission in July to prepare the Tribunal; it was headed by Selim Chalabi, whose brother was head of the De-Baathification Commission. In October 2005, the Iraqi Special Tribunal was established under Iraqi National Law and renamed the Iraqi High Tribunal (IHT). Its function was to try cases of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. Judges, prosecutors and other members of the court were exclusively Iraqi. Technical and logistic assistance was supplied by the Regime Crimes Liaison Office (RCLO), which was staffed primarily by Americans and based at the US embassy in Baghdad. The IHT was therefore a domestic judicial

**180** Coalition Provisional Authority. Order Nr. 48 from 10 December 2003: [http://www.loc.gov/law/help/hussein/docs/20031210\\_CPAORD\\_48\\_IST\\_and\\_Appendix\\_A.pdf](http://www.loc.gov/law/help/hussein/docs/20031210_CPAORD_48_IST_and_Appendix_A.pdf) (last accessed 3 Feb. 2012).

institution for the prosecution of international crimes (International Center for Transitional Justice, 2007) and heavily influenced by the US administration.

International human rights organizations criticized the establishment of the Tribunal, since its rapid and somewhat obscure organization in a highly vindictive climate left little time to collect sound documentary and forensic evidence. The Tribunal was also attacked for rejecting the active involvement of the United Nations, international human rights organizations and transitional justice experts as participants, as well as for its lack of communication with Iraqi society. Indeed, in the immediate aftermath of the invasion, international human rights organizations had appealed to the UN Security Council to send an international expert commission to develop and recommend an appropriate tribunal strategy drawing on experience in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia. They were concerned that »the Iraqi judiciary, weakened and compromised by decades of Baath Party rule, lacks the capacity, experience and independence to provide fair trials for the abuses of the past« (Human Rights Watch 2003c, cited from Stover et al., 2005, p.2). They furthermore criticized the Tribunal's non-compliance with international human rights and legal standards. Provision for and later implementation of the death penalty was a serious bone of contention between the CPA and ICG, on the one hand, and their close ally, the United Kingdom, on the other (Stover et al., 2005). International organizations warned that its use would send a message of vengeance rather than justice, and they called upon the United Nations not »to lend its legitimacy and expertise« to what they considered a »flawed tribunal« before the trials had even begun (Human Rights Watch, 2003c; Amnesty International, 2005b).

*The Dujail trial*

The Iraqi High Tribunal began on 19 October 2005 with the trial of Saddam Hussein and seven other defendants in the Dujail case. Following an assassination attempt on Saddam Hussein near the town of Dujail in July 1982, Iraqi security forces had taken brutal revenge on the town, massacring 148 men and boys, detaining, torturing and deporting hundreds of other inhabitants, and destroying houses and agricultural land.

International organizations, including the US-based International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) and Human Rights Watch, sent observers to the trial sessions and published detailed reports. In their view, the trial fell short of international fair trial standards and was thus »fundamentally flawed« (ICTJ 2006b; HRW 2006). They specifically accused the Iraqi government and the de-Baathification Commission of undermining the independence of the judiciary. The interference by Ministers and Members of Parliament at the trial led to the rotation of four judges in one year and the de-Baathification Commission »functioned as a sword over the work of the Tribunal« (Sissons & Bassin, 2007 p. 277), repeatedly replacing court personnel – from judges to administrative staff – for alleged affiliation with the Baath regime. Against a background of deteriorating security outside the courtroom, three defence lawyers and numerous Tribunal officials were killed during this period; witnesses, survivors of the Dujail massacre and their relatives likewise suffered retributive attacks (Sissons & Bassin, 2007). Although the trial ended on 27 July 2006, the verdict was not announced until 5 November 2006: Saddam Hussein and two other defendants were sentenced to death; their four co-defendants were given prison terms ranging from fifteen years to lifelong.

### *The Anfal trial*

On 21 August 2006, more than two months before the verdict on the Dujail trial was returned, the Anfal trial began. On trial apart from Saddam Hussein was Ali Hassan al-Majid, former Secretary General of the Baath Party's Northern Bureau and the commander who had ordered the Anfal Campaign and the Halabja gas attacks in 1988. The five remaining defendants were senior military officials with missions in the north during the Anfal operations. The allegations included genocide,<sup>181</sup> crimes against humanity and war crimes.

In his opening statement, the chief prosecutor, Ja'afar al-Mussawi, gave a meticulous description of the eight stages of the Anfal Campaign, the use of chemical and conventional weapons against civilians, the murder of 182,000 people and the destruction of thousands of villages. He underlined the intention of the perpetrators to »eliminate the Kurdish inhabitants« from the target areas and thus the genocidal nature of the Campaign (ICTJ 2009, p. 6). Seventy-six complainants presented testimony in the course of twenty-three trial sessions. Most of them were Anfal survivors who testified to their personal experience, including Suhaila and Hataw. Numerous testimonies concentrated on chemical weapons, with appalling accounts of injuries, deaths and the long-term effects of poison gas. Several complainants had escaped mass execution at the last moment and now testified to the death of hundreds by Iraqi firing squads. Women gave harrowing accounts of separation from their relatives, deportation to detention camps, where they were given little food or water and no sanitation, and the death and burial of thousands of prisoners in Nugra Salman. Witness accounts detailed the suffering of Anfal victims and survivors, and stressed that Anfal had targeted all Kurds in the affected areas, regardless of

**181** In pre-trial investigations, only Saddam Hussein and Ali Hassan al-Majid had been charged with genocide. In the course of the trial, however, the allegation was extended to include all of the defendants (ICTJ, 2005).

their status. Forensic experts, most of them US-Americans involved in the exhumation of mass graves, gave account on their findings. But all witnesses failed to supply evidence of the defendants' personal liability in Anfal crimes. This was instead provided by 4,935 documents and audio and video material, which outlined the chain of command and the personal responsibility of Saddam Hussein, Ali Hassan al-Majid and most of the other defendants in the deliberate murder or deportation of vast numbers of Kurds (ICTJ, 2007).

The defence lawyers made no attempt to deny the killings or mass deportation; describing Anfal as a legitimate act of war against Kurdish rebels who cooperated with invading Iranian troops, their defence strategy focused instead on questioning the legitimacy of a tribunal set up by the »occupation forces«. In the final stages of the trial, they concentrated on absolving each of their clients of individual liability. In the last trial session before the verdicts were announced, Ali Hassan al-Majid personally addressed the court. He said he

had never participated in genocide, because he had never discriminated in ethnicity or sect. He had not heard of mass graves before they were discussed in the Anfal trial (...) Al-Majid (sic!) said that all [defendants] were innocent of any involvement in mass graves or civilian transportation schemes, and that it was not the role of military intelligence to deal with civilians. Finally Al-Majid (sic!) defended the Anfal campaign within the greater context of the Iran-Iraq war, saying that there was a military necessity of response to Iran's occupation of a part of northern Iraq the size of Lebanon (ICTJ, 2008, p.16).

Although seen as more professional than the Dujail trial, international organizations and observers maintained their critique of the Tribunal's open hostility towards the defendants in the Anfal trial, the unsafe environment for defence lawyers and witnesses, unfair procedures and political interference with the court's independence (ICTJ, 2007, 2008, 2009; Kelly, 2007). Judge Abdullah al-Amiri, for example, was replaced after allegations of bias when he remarked that »Saddam was not a dictator« (Kelly, 2007, p. 238).

### *Anfal women's perspective on the trials*

Beyond all criticism of the trials, from the perspective of Anfal women, the Anfal trial was an important milestone on the road to acknowledgement of what they had gone through. They came together each day during the trial to follow the live transmission from the courtroom on television. When the chief prosecutor described the Anfal atrocities in detail, specifically addressing the suffering of women and children in Nugra Salman and other detention camps, the women were convinced that everyone in Iraq would finally know what happened: »Now nobody, not even the Arabs, can say, that it did not happen« was a frequent comment.<sup>182</sup> The testimonies of women like Suhaila and Hataw in the courtroom gave a sense of satisfaction to the women watching the screen. »Women like us,« they used to say, »looked straight in Saddam's face and told everything.« They saw the testimonies as their personal representatives at the Tribunal, once again highlighting their strong collective sense.

The testimonies on sexual violence and rape during Anfal related by several witnesses in the courtroom and the chief prosecutor's denunciations of systematic use of sexual violence during Anfal paved the way to a more open debate on this taboo issue among the women and in Kurdish society (see Chapter 15).<sup>183</sup> However, only third persons testified to sexual violence at the trial; no woman had been found to testify in the first person.

Hataw was one of the witnesses. She talked in the courtroom about the rape of a young woman by Iraqi soldiers in Nugra Salman; a scene that Hataw witnessed from be-

**182** Voices of Anfal women in Tuz Khurmatu and Sumud/Rizgary watching the trial sessions in TV.

**183** Though the prosecutor had asked the defendants in the Anfal trial to be charged with rape and sexual violence, these charges were not officially filed. Evidence of rape was instead subsumed under evidence of human rights violations (Global Justice Center, 2008).

hind a curtain. I have heard her relate this memory several times after her testimony at the trial. Every time she was utterly distressed when recalling the scene and lost herself in lengthy and unstructured accounts of it, reflecting her incredulity and horror.

Suhaila (2011), too, gives centre stage to a witness of sexual violence in her account of her appearance at the trial:

When I took the stand in court, Saddam wasn't present.

*Qu: So you didn't see him?*

Oh yes, I saw him every day before that, but he wasn't there when I spoke. And do you know why? Mamosta A. spoke before me. She's from Kalar, she's tall, she's like you (in other words, she looks like a foreigner). She's blonde and light-skinned; she's a strong woman. Her hair was cut short and she was wearing trousers (she talks for a while about Mamosta A.).

*Qu: And what did Mamosta A. say?*

Mamosta A. told the court about her time in Dibs (the detention centre in Dibs); there was a woman there with her daughter, the daughter was very beautiful. One of the officers kept eyeing her. Then he grabbed her face like this (she pinches her cheek with her fingers) and she threw her food in his face. Then the soldiers undressed her until she was naked, naked, and they tied her to the goalpost in the courtyard, naked, naked. Everyone could see her, her whole body without any clothes, and then they raped her (she uses the term *sinaian kird*. I asked whether they had beaten or raped her, using *ihtisab*, the Arabic term for rape). Yes, yes, they raped her, and then they all put banknotes on her head like this, in her hair (she demonstrates with her own hair), and then they killed her. And everyone saw it. When Mamosta A. told this story, Saddam broke into a rage. He moved his head like this (Suhaila shakes her head vigorously from left to right). He said, »No, no, she's lying! Nothing like that happened in Iraq. It's not

true!« He was raging and left the courtroom and didn't appear the next day. So then when I spoke, he wasn't there.<sup>184</sup>

For both Suhaila and Hataw, the account of their courtroom appearance - and thus of historically documented and publicly known facts - served them as a vehicle to address and talk about sexual violence and rape more explicitly than ever before. Though their testimonies in the courtroom certainly had a series of extremely distressful moments, both Hataw and Suhaila recall their attendance to the trial as a positive experience and talk about it with pride and satisfaction. Hataw (2012) recalls:

Among the women in Germyan, it was me to be selected to go to speak at the Tribunal. And then Suhaila came as well. We went to Baghdad; we stayed for ten days. We saw Saddam Hussein, we faced up to him; we talked straight in his face. I talked about our village, I talked about the children I lost, about my husband ... I was myself in Nugra Salman. I talked about the women there, how the soldiers took the children from them.... For me, to be able to talk directly to Saddam, to face up to him, that was like being born once again. When I left the trial room, there was a foreigner. He was blond and tall; he kissed my hand and said, »Well done, you talked greatly, thank you that you - a Kurdish woman - talked this way to Saddam. I can tell you,« he said, »by the time the feast comes, Saddam will be executed.« And he was right: Saddam was executed before the feast.

And Suhaila (2011) relates:

They took us, me, Hataw and two men from Sumud, five, six or seven from Chamchamal and Shoresh, one from Sheikh Taweel

**184** Indeed, Saddam Hussein is reported to have reacted to testimonies on rape and sexual violence in outrage: »I can't sit down and remain silent when it's said that an Iraqi woman was raped,« he said. »This couldn't happen while Saddam Hussein is alive.« (Global Justice Center, 2008).

and Mamosta A.<sup>185</sup> from Kalar ... and then we went with a tiny little aeroplane from Sulaimania to Baghdad. It was the first time I'd ever been in an aeroplane. One woman who had a heart disease fainted straightaway in the plane. We gave her some pills and fanned her. She should not have flown with her heart disease. Then we stayed in Baghdad from Friday to Friday. I was very frightened there. Baghdad is dangerous, something is always exploding. (...)

*Qu: How was your own testimony?*

They visited us beforehand and took down our testimonies. I told them what life had been like in our village, and how the soldiers came and my husband disappeared. They wrote everything down and read it to us again before the trial so we wouldn't forget. And then I said the same in court. I was very composed. Saddam's lawyers were mean and asked a lot of questions. One of them kept saying, »This woman is lying. She's not from a village, she's an urban woman, she's not a peasant«. But I always answered calmly, »How can this man dare to say such a thing? (She leans back and continues speaking pointedly slowly and with great precision). I am from the village of Chwar Sheikh, I grew up there. We were peasants, we had a village life...« I stayed calm. But some of the other women got confused with all the questions. They couldn't cope with it. They were bewildered and couldn't talk any more. But I stayed calm.

Suhaila's and Hataw's positive memories of their appearance in court surprised me. I knew from reports on Bosnian and Rwandan female survivors of violence that testifying at international courts had been a painful experience, leaving them humiliated and their suffering belittled by judicial procedures, defence lawyers and judges.<sup>186</sup> Suhaila mentions the

**185** Mamosta means teacher and is used as a sign of respect in conjunction with the person's first name.

**186** Esther Mujawajo, a survivor of the Rwandan genocide, described the humiliating experiences of women survivors who testified at the Arusha International Tribunal for Rwanda, at a meeting entitled »Stop violence against women - promote health rights for women; women's project in Rwanda and Iraq«, organized by Amnesty International Germany Network

discouraging effects that the defence lawyer's questioning had on many testimonies, and when she once publicly talked about her testimony in a conference in Berlin in April 2008, she clearly denounced the aggressive approach of Saddam Hussein's lawyers. Yet the prominent feeling associated with her testimony experience is the deep satisfaction she had felt »facing those responsible and claiming accountability in the name of my people and my disappeared husband«. <sup>187</sup>

### *Saddam Hussein's execution*

While the Anfal trial was still in session, the Iraqi High Tribunal announced the verdicts passed in the Dujail trial on 5 November 2006. On 26 December of the same year, Saddam Hussein's appeal to the court of cassation was rejected. Four days later, on 30 December 2006, Hussein was executed by hanging. Prime Minister al-Maliki had hastily pushed through the execution without adhering to formal procedures. The following day, a fifteen-minute silent video of the final moments before the execution was shown on Iraqi television. A second video recorded secretly by mobile phone showing the moment of his death with the hangmen taunting him to the very end made its way onto the Internet and triggered a worldwide storm of protest at the vindictiveness of the spectacle (Rogg, 2007). <sup>188</sup> Reactions ranged from overall condemnation of the death penalty (Amnesty

for healing professions in Cologne on 3 November 2007 and in her book *One life more* (Mujawayo & Belhaddad, 2007, pp. 294-304).

**187** See HAUKARI e.V.: Protocol of the workshop »Violence, Memory and Dealing with the Past in Iraq. Twenty Years after the Anfal Operations in Kurdistan-Iraq : The Survivors' Perspective«. Berlin, 17 April 2008. Available at: [www.haukari.de](http://www.haukari.de) (last accessed 1 April 2013).

**188** Two other defendants in the Dujail trial, Barzan Ibrahim al-Tikriti, the former Chief of the Secret Intelligence Service and Saddam Hussein's half brother, and Awad Hamd al-Bandar, the former Chief Judge of the Revolutionary Court, were hanged two weeks later on 15 January 2007.

International, 2007) to fears that the execution had a highly divisive impact, was »detrimental to the justice process in Iraq« (ICTJ, 2007) and would fan the flames of sectarian conflict. It had furthermore sabotaged any efforts to scrutinize Saddam Hussein's role in other crimes (ibid.; Savage, 2007).

Indeed, after the execution the Tribunal announced that Saddam Hussein would not be tried posthumously for the six other charges pending against him; all judicial proceedings were dropped. The International Center for Transitional Justice stated that media coverage of the Anfal trial experienced a significant fall-off following Saddam Hussein's execution (ibid.).

On 24 June 2007, Ali Hassan al-Majid, the architect of the Anfal Campaign, received five death sentences for genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. His execution was nonetheless postponed when Iraq's Kurdish President Jalal Talabani refused to sanction it.

Al-Majid received four more death sentences in the following years for his role in massacres against Shia rebels in 1991, his participation in the assassination of Grand Ayatollah as-Sadr, and his ordering of the gas attack on the Kurdish town of Halabja in 1988. He was finally executed on 25 January 2012.

In my observation, Anfal women never had any doubt that Saddam Hussein and Ali Hassan al-Majid deserved the death penalty. They fantasized in numerous conversations about what they would do to them. They imagined »cutting them to pieces«, »roasting them like chicken« or »every Anfal woman driving a nail into their bodies«. <sup>189</sup> They also wanted Ali Hassan al-Majid to be killed in Halabja or in Germyan, »at the scene of his crimes«. An expression of their individual desire to avenge their suffering, on the one hand, and of

**189** Some of these fantasies drew on real images from the Kurdish insurrection in 1991, when Kurdish *peshmerga* conquered the Iraqi Secret Service building in Sulaimania, and Kurdish civilians, including women, took brutal revenge on the dead bodies of the officials.

the overall vindictive climate in the victims' communities, on the other, these vengeful fantasies likewise reflected the widespread retributive concept of justice in a country where the majority of the population approves of the death penalty (ICTJ, 2004).

Notwithstanding their general approval of the death penalty for Saddam Hussein, Anfal women were disappointed and discouraged by his hasty execution before the Anfal trial had run its course. They felt cut off from the possibility of gaining information about the fate of their relatives. They felt betrayed in their desire for justice, since his execution would now go down in history as related to the Dujail massacre against the Shia population, rather than to the Anfal Campaign and – more generally – his crimes against the Kurds. Indeed, many interpreted the rash execution as a political manoeuvre by the Shia factions in Iraq to undermine global acknowledgement of atrocities committed against the Kurdish people.<sup>190</sup> Thus, although the Anfal trial and the main perpetrators' execution gave a partial sense of satisfaction and acknowledgement to Anfal women, they ultimately left their hopes for certainty and justice unfulfilled. Emotional reactions ranged from bitterness and lingering fantasies of revenge to a sense of relief and satisfaction.

Today, some women talk about Saddam Hussein's death with distance, like Naila (2012) who answers my question how she felt the day of his execution:

How could I feel? Would you not be happy, when your greatest enemy was hanged?

Other women say they were relieved but did not feel a strong emotional impact, like Khadija (2010):

**190** Gulnaz Aziz Qadir at the Conference: »Violence, Memory and Dealing with the Past in Iraq: 20 Years after the Anfal Operations: the Survivors' Perspective. Organized by HAUKARI Germany, the Zentrum Moderner Orient and the Heinrich Böll Foundation in Berlin, April 2008.

Of course I remember the day Saddam fell and also the day he was arrested and the day he was hanged... Of course I was glad, but it doesn't bring my brothers back (...) After what happened to us, nothing has any taste anymore.

Hataw (2012) links Saddam's death to the birth of her grandchild and thus underlines her feelings of satisfaction:

The day Saddam was hanged, my grandson was born in our village. I was out there in our village, and when we came back they said, Saddam was hanged. For me, in that moment, it was as if nobody had ever been Anfal. I was so happy.

For Amira (2011) the trial against Saddam Hussein and his execution have restored a sense of justice:

God has done justice to him on our behalf. He had done evil things and it fell back upon him. He killed all these people, he took away the fathers from all these children. God punished him on our behalf.

And Suhaila (2010) expresses a deep feeling of relief:

I say to the other women, »You can stop lamenting ... Look, we have houses, we have money, our children get married ... and above all, our enemy is dead. And not only dead! What he brought upon us fell back on him a thousand times. He lost everything. His sons are dead and he was hanged. But the worst - how humiliating for him - they pulled him out of a hole. He had hidden, his hair was like this (she gesticulates to show how dishevelled Saddam Hussein's hair was when he was captured). They looked into his mouth with a flashlight and everybody could see it on television. That's a bad end. He wanted to conquer the world. He killed our children, and now he's got what he deserved. That's a message for all those who do evil. It comes back to them.« I say to the other women, »Look we're poor and we're ignorant. When Anfal came upon us, no one on earth saw our suffering. And now, the whole world has seen this undignified death and knows our fate. Women like me sat opposite Saddam Hussein at the Tribunal. And we were listened to. All those years of suffering... but

now that my enemy has got his punishment ... now I'm calm; now I can relax.« (She leans back and smiles.)

### *Contested concepts of transitional justice*

The United Nations and international rights organizations harshly criticized the transitional justice approach adopted by the CPA and the Iraqi Transitional Government in the immediate aftermath of the regime change. The dominance of the occupation forces in the process, the tendency towards »victor's justice«, their lack of response to human rights violations committed by their own troops and ultimately the fuelling of sectarian conflict instead of the search for inclusive solutions were the chief points of disagreement. Indeed, in the first few months after the invasion, the CPA on one side and the United Nations Human Rights Office and international organizations on the other side entered into a heated debate on the »right« transitional justice approach to be adopted. The CPA and UN Human Rights Offices organized parallel round table conferences on transitional justice issues and competed to fund local initiatives. Yet when the bombing of the UN headquarters in August 2003 and the ICRC in October 2003 led to the withdrawal of the UN and most international organizations and experts, their local influence waned. It would furthermore be misleading to think that Iraqis regarded the United Nations as a more legitimate carrier of transitional justice than the CPA and the coalition forces. On the contrary, animosity towards the United Nations was prevalent across all Iraqi factions. Former supporters of the Baath regime associated the United Nations with sanctions against Iraq and the subsequent economic and political decline after 1991; former opposition groups, including the Kurds, accused the United Nations of ambivalence in their dealings with Saddam Hussein and of large-scale mismanagement of humanitarian programmes for the Iraqi and Kurdish populations in the 1990s.

Beyond international critique and debate, the retributive approach of the CPA and the Iraqi Transitional Government in the post-war process largely matched the attitudes and emotionalism that obtained in the victim communities. As shown above, it coincided also with Anfal women's desire for retaliation and initially gave them a sense of acknowledgement at national and international level. In the last analysis, however, it left their demand for certainty and evidence without redress. In Anfal women's current narratives, the demand for truth, accountability and justice remains paramount. They call on the Iraqi government to punish other perpetrators beyond the main figures of the Baath regime; they press to hold accountable international companies that supported the Baath regime and for a national reparation programme; they expect an apology by the Iraqi National Assembly and the current Iraqi National Government.

### **12.3 New violence, new conflict - contrasting narratives of victimhood**

The process of de-Baathification and the Iraqi High Tribunal trials were to remain the only major institutional steps in transitional justice in subsequent years.

The security environment worsened in late 2003. Iraq was devastated by new waves of violence, as supporters and members of the old regime, backed by militant Islamists from neighbouring countries, indiscriminately attacked coalition forces, new government structures, local and international aid workers and journalists, claiming numerous victims on a daily basis. Live transmission of hostage decapitations is but one example of the savage brutality involved. The coalition forces and the nascent Iraqi security structures responded with massive military attacks that were equally indiscriminate, targeting Sunni Arab civilians and violating local moral and cultural codes. The killing of more than a thousand inhabitants in Falluja and disclosures of torture, abuse and humiliation of Iraqi prisoners by US soldiers in Abu Ghraib

prison became sad symbols of the ruthless counterinsurgency strategies employed by the coalition and Iraqi forces and became metaphors for Sunni Arab victimhood. Mass killings at Shia mosques and pilgrimages brought Shia armed militia onto the scene to combat Sunni Arab insurgents and the US occupation forces, generating open sectarian conflict in the process. In the Kurdish north of the country, the security environment had stabilized; but the Kurdistan Regional Government and the Shia-dominated Iraqi central government clashed over oil and the contested area of Kirkuk: here, Turkmen, Kurdish and Arab factions struggled for political and military control of the region. Against the background of overall conflict, unbridled violence and fear, the former dividing line between advocates and opponents of the Baath regime shifted to a deep fragmentation of Iraqi society along ethnic, religious and regional lines. The topic of transitional justice and dealing with crimes of the past was struck off the political agenda to accommodate the priority of an inclusive compromise to end the violence. »Inclusion« of the Sunni Arab factions in the political process became a key element of a change in US strategy in 2007, the so-called »surge« that saw US forces ally with Sunni Arab tribes in the Sunni heartland against al-Qaeda (International Crisis Group, 2008a, 2008b). Inclusion was also to be the new political formula for Prime Minister al-Maliki's »State of Law Coalition« set-up for the Iraqi elections in 2010.<sup>191</sup>

### *The political benefit of victimhood*

For the diverse ethnic, religious and regional factions in Iraq, victimhood is an important argument when it comes to justifying claims to power in the on-going Iraqi national process. The Kurds base their claim to regional autonomy and their call for international guarantees on their long history

**191** For these developments, see also Chapter 3.

of persecution, specifically crimes committed against them by the Baath regime. As I will show in greater detail later, the »national trauma« of Anfal has become a major point of reference for the constitution of the Kurdish national identity in the Kurdish public debate after 2003. Shia factions refer to decades of repression and a high death toll, specifically in the massacres after the Shia insurrection in 1991, to legitimize their dominant role in today's Iraq. Sunni Arab groups, on the other hand, argue that the number of deaths caused by US raids and detention after 2003 match those caused by the brutality of the Baath regime. Iraqi communists, Fayli Kurds, Turkmen and Assyrian Christians allude to a long record of persecution and the violation of their rights. Thus contrasting and at times conflicting memories and narratives of victimhood compete in the national political arena.

None of the factions is prepared to delegate ownership of dealing with the past to a national level. Every step of the way in dealing with past crimes is politicized and highly conflictive. Initiatives such as the National Centre for Missing Persons are almost ignored by local and regional groups. The Iraqi Human Rights Ministry in Baghdad competes with the Kurdistan Regional Government Ministry of Martyrs and Anfal Affairs for access to and authority over the examination of mass graves containing Kurdish victims.

In 2010 I attended a meeting with the then Iraqi Human Rights Minister, Mrs Wijdan Salim, at the German Institute for Human Rights in Berlin. Mrs Salim, herself a Chaldean Christian, underlined the exclusive authority of the Iraqi Human Rights Ministry to lead the transitional justice process and decide on the opening of mass graves in Iraq. She appealed for the support of the German government and its organizations. Drawing on my experience with Anfal survivors, I argued in the discussion that, from a psychological point of view, survivors of massive violence first demand recognition of their specific experience before agreeing to enter into dialogue with other victim groups, and I recommended seeking the support of local and regional victim initiatives as

a basis for communication among the various victim groups. The minister reacted somewhat curtly. The Kurds, she said, had a vast lobby around the world and received a great deal of support for their victims. But no one was interested in victims of violence that occurred after 2003 and the mass graves of these people. She then told the story of a Kurdish boy who had been deported from his village during Anfal. Separated from his family, he was found and brought up by an Arab family in southern Iraq. He first discovered that he was a Kurd and a victim of Anfal when he was grown up. When he travelled to Kurdistan in search of his roots and his family, the Kurdish community rejected him, thinking he was an Arab. »You see,« she said to me, »the story of this poor boy ... this is also an Anfal story.« From the countless stories of suffering during Anfal, she chose the one that could serve to put some blame on the Kurdish victims.

International conferences in Kurdistan-Iraq that deal with the violent past are usually an exchange of Shia and Kurdish victim perspectives with no participation by Sunni Arabs. The third conference on mass graves in Erbil in April 2011<sup>192</sup> organized by the Kurdistan Regional Ministry of Martyrs and Anfal Affairs and the Shia al-Mihrab Martyr Foundation, originally announced as an »academic exchange«, was then dominated by tension between Kurdish and Shia representatives and their dispute over »who suffered more« - to the point that they could not even agree on a joint conference resolution.

Against the background of on-going violence, contrasting victims' narratives and the use of victimhood for political benefit, there is little room for the notion of »reconciliation«. Whenever it is mentioned today, it refers to the current struggle for a national platform and an inclusive political compromise to end the present violence in Iraq. Apart from the precipitate de-Baathification process and the Iraqi High

**192** 3rd International Conference on Mass Graves in Iraq. Erbil, Kurdistan-Iraq, 17-19 April, 2011.

Tribunal Trials, no further institutional steps at the national level have been undertaken to address crimes committed under the Baath regime. Previously discussed concepts of Truth and Reconciliation Commissions have vanished from the political agenda. Nor is there any societal debate on the claims and needs of victims of past crimes.

In contrast to the importance of victimhood in political discourse, however, initiatives to address the needs of victims of past and current violence are conspicuous by their absence. Although the individual factions grant economic aid to their affiliated victim groups, the latter's psychological needs remain largely unattended. Instead of finding certainty, justice, assistance and acknowledgment of their suffering, they are confronted with on-going violence and narratives from new victim groups, contrasting and neutralizing their own experiences of violence. The lack of assistance combined with the political use of victimhood in the public discourse fosters competition among them instead of dialogue. It translates also into feelings of marginalization and a burning desire among survivors to get their very specific experience of violence heard. At the aforementioned conference on mass graves in Erbil, I presented the case of the female survivors of Anfal in Germyan. Several delegates from other regions of Kurdistan approached me and complained that I had failed to mention the Anfal survivors, for instance, in Balisan, in Qaradagh and in Dohuk. The latent competition even among various groups of Anfal survivors from different regions and their fierce bid to be heard, respected and acknowledged is, in my view, continuously reinforced and prolonged by the use of victimhood in the political arena and by the lack of assistance.

*The counselling centre for victims of political violence in Tuz Khurmatu – an example*

The following example from my practical work illustrates the challenges of dealing with victims of past crimes under conditions of on-going violence and the daily emergence of new victims. In 2004, as part of my work for HAUKARI, I was involved in setting up a »counselling centre for victims of political violence« in Tuz Khurmatu, a town situated between Kirkuk and Baghdad in the governorate of Tikrit, a former stronghold of the Baath regime. Tuz Khurmatu had been under the tight control of the Baath regime until 2003. With some forty per cent Turkmen population of Shia belief, thirty per cent Sunni Arabs and another thirty per cent Kurds, it continued to be an arena of conflict after 2003. In 1988, Tuz Khurmatu had been one of the Iraqi army operation centres for the Anfal Campaign. Now, the majority of Kurds living here were Anfal survivors, among them a large group of women bereft of the male members of their families. The Turkmen community had likewise suffered from persecution under the former regime. Hosting a US base on the outskirts of the town, the city was now the site of frequent terrorist attacks claiming also civilian victims. At the same time, Sunni Arabs in Tuz Khurmatu and the surrounding villages had become the targets of the US military and Iraqi security forces in counterinsurgency raids since 2003.

The counselling centre for victims of political violence set off with an inclusive approach, addressing explicitly victims of violence from all ethnic and religious groups and from all time periods: victims of past Baathist crimes as well as those of human rights violations after 2003. The centre provided legal and health services, psychological support and educational training and claimed to be a space for the promotion of interethnic and interreligious dialogue in this tense region. Local staff members underlined the centre's inclusive nature by calling it »As-Salam Centre – Peace Centre«. Although this ambitious plan seems naïve in retrospect, it reflected our own and our Kurdish partners' optimism and

enthusiasm in the first few months after the collapse of the regime.

We faced a number of challenges from the outset. The Sunni-Arab-dominated city council strongly objected to the Centre, equating support for the victims of violence with solidarity with the Kurds and the Shia. When they finally granted permission, the work of the Centre was subject to their constant control. Although HAUKARI had clearly rejected financial and logistic support from the coalition forces and the CPA, the Centre was suspected of being an »American« or »Israeli« project. When it was first set up close to a Kurdish residential quarter, Turkmen and Arab groups boycotted the Centre. When the Centre moved to the »neutral« city centre, Kurdish Anfal women claimed they were unable to reach it because it was located outside their neighbourhoods. Finding Sunni Arab staff to work with the multi-ethnic team of social workers and physicians at the Centre turned out to be an extremely difficult task. Scepticism and a sense of mistrust predominated in the staff, complicating each step of the way. It began with the choice of words at project meetings or in reports: Turkmen staff members referred for example to the Anfal Campaigns as »military retaliation«; Kurds interpreted this as the use of the perpetrator's language and fiercely fought for the use of the term »genocide«. Public meetings at the Centre, set up to foster inter-ethnic dialogue, regularly developed into open clashes between Turkmen, Kurds and Arabs, all of whom claimed to comprise the majority in the disputed city of Kirkuk.

Nonetheless, a surprisingly large number of victims sought out the Centre; there were approximately two hundred monthly visits, primarily for health and legal counselling, both door openers to issues of a more social or psychological nature. The vast majority of visitors were Kurdish women who had survived the Anfal Campaign. As a prerequisite for a relationship of trust, these women expected commitment, empathy with their unique experience of violence and the unmistakable naming of victims and perpetrators. The Centre was constantly obliged to compromise between

the diverse and often contradictory claims and needs of the different victim groups. This led to a levelling of experiences of violence and risked undermining the survivors' confidence in the programme. Anfal women, for example, frequently expressed their discomfort at being referred to Turkmen staff and would talk about their experience only to Kurdish staff members. They felt offended at contrasting narratives of victimhood in workshops. The idea of contact with former collaborators with or supporters of the Baath regime became a source of stress, alienating them from the assistance programme altogether.

After only two years in operation, the Centre was closed down due to the overall deterioration of the security environment in Tuz Khurmatu, including several attacks on staff members. The experience of the Centre demonstrates the hazards of the tightrope walk between our longstanding commitment to the survivors of Anfal and our endeavour to promote reconciliatory dialogue. Before entering into dialogue with other victim groups or even perpetrators, victims of violence first of all need to be heard and their specific experience acknowledged. Proposals for dialogue and reconciliation can exacerbate the sense of competition with other victims if they are introduced too soon or do not come from the victims themselves.

### *Disappointment and alienation*

Unlike Anfal women in Tuz Khurmatu, Anfal women in Sumud/Rizgary have hardly any daily social interaction with Shia or Sunni Arab Iraqis. They mix with Kurds only and follow developments at the national level solely through the media. When asked about their opinion on national Iraqi developments, they often rather specify their approach to »the Arabs« in general.

Some express their general mistrust of Arabs, like Khadija (2010), who reacted with great indignation about »Arabs«

sitting in the first row at the Anfal remembrance ceremony in Rizgary in 2010. »Why should I sit behind an Arab?«

When asked about their relation with Arabs, others, like Naila (2012), recall positive experiences:

Shortly after Anfal, my son worked as a shepherd for an Arab over there. When this man heard about my husband's fate he said, »I will go to our authorities, I will ask for you what happened, why your father was deported. And where he is now.« He knew people from the government. They came to him and he hosted them sometimes. He said, »I will go to them; if your father is there, I will take care, that he will be released«. He actually went; but when he came back he said, »I am sorry, I cannot do anything for you.«

Most Anfal women know little about current Iraqi policy and talk about national developments with great distance, like Hataw (2012).

We thought that the Kurds would be safe after Saddam's death. But the days after the Trial, when we came back, I was very afraid. I did not dare to show up on the street. I thought, they might say, »She has testified in the trial« ... until when he was executed. Then I was really relieved. How things developed in Iraq later ... if the Baathists will once again come to power... I do not know, I know little about these things.

However, Anfal women's disappointment in the Iraqi government's delay in addressing their claims for truth, justice and compensation is palpable. Their demands for punishment of other perpetrators and for an official apology for crimes committed against the Kurds have remained unanswered. In 2009, the Iraqi National Assembly finally recognized the Anfal Campaign as genocide. The Iraqi government, however, does not consider itself responsible for the crimes of the Baath regime and consequently refuses to express an apology. As for compensation, a working group within the Kurdistan Regional Parliament is still discussing the criteria for a reparations programme to be submitted to the Iraqi government.

### *Reconciliatory messages – Son of Babylon*

Vivid discussion on reconciliation developed around the already mentioned film *Son of Babylon* by Mohammed al-Daraji (2009), himself original from Baghdad. The leading role in the film was played by a woman Anfal survivor from Rizgary, Shazada Hussein Mohammed. Anfal women in Rizgary had therefore a close relation to the film and shared the leading actor's experiences.

The film *Son of Babylon* itself contains a strong reconciliatory message. A Kurdish woman travels throughout Iraq in search of her missing son and comes across Arab women from central and southern Iraq at mass gravesites. Although they speak different languages, they understand each other's pain. An Arab man joins the Kurdish woman, develops a close relationship to her grandson and helps them out of several awkward situations. He eventually turns out to be a former soldier of the Republican Guard, Saddam Hussein's elite troop, which played a prominent part in the Anfal operations. When she finds out, the Kurdish woman is outraged, shouts at him and rejects his company. In the course of the film she understands, that he, too, was forced into military service and finally forgives him. When they separate, the man tells the little boy that he can always come to him if he needs help. The film ends with the Kurdish woman's death. Having failed to find her son, she dies of heartbreak and despair. Her grandson is left behind, alone. The film suggests that he might fall back on the former Republican Guard for support.

*Son of Babylon* was given an enthusiastic reception at the Berlin Film Festival in February 2010 and awarded the Human Rights Prize by Amnesty International and the Peace Prize by the Heinrich Böll Foundation. Producer Mohammed al-Daraji, an Iraqi from Baghdad in British exile, spoke of his efforts to gain support for the film in Iraq. The Iraqi government refused on the grounds that the protagonists in the film were Kurds. The Kurdistan Regional Government was prepared to support the film if the positive figure of the for-

mer Republican Guard was removed. The film was finally realized with European funds.

The film was first screened in European countries and to a Baghdad audience. Only with great delay, in 2012, was it shown also in Kurdistan. I had various occasions to see *Son of Babylon* with Kurdish colleagues and friends, most of whom worked with Anfal survivors. They were upset that the film had amalgamated different phases of violence in Iraq and, in this way, falsified historical truth in the interests of fiction. They felt offended about the positive portrayal of the Republican Guard, one of the Baath regime's most brutal instruments of terror. They declared that a reconciliatory film of this kind might make sense in the future, but in the present it had the negative effect of trivializing the consequences of the Anfal Campaign, at a time when Kurds were still struggling for recognition of the historical truth and against the denial of Anfal by other Iraqi groups. Some would even say they felt the »Arab« producer had deliberately expropriated Anfal for political benefit.

The reaction of the few Anfal women who saw the film was much less critical. They expressed their admiration for Shazada Hussein Mohammed's (»one of us«) performance in the film, suffered when watching her death on the screen and expressed satisfaction that the issue of mass graves had found entrance to the cinemas of the world.

*Summary - dealing with the past under conditions of on-going conflict*

The fall of the Baath regime in 2003 marked a dramatic change for Anfal women in Germyan, restoring above all a sense of security after decades of fear. Their newly flourishing hope for a return of their relatives vanished with the finding of some three hundred mass graves throughout Iraq. The latter's opening and the identification of the victims was hampered and delayed by the volatile security situation and political conflict over control of the process. Thus, to

this day most Anfal women do not have individual certainty about their relatives' fate and continue to live in uncertainty and distress.

The debate on a transitional process for Iraq, initially pushed forward by former victims' groups, the CPA and international organizations, has meanwhile been pushed off the political agenda by on-going violence and political conflict. The former dividing line between victims and perpetrators has shifted towards a deep fragmentation of Iraqi society along religious, ethnic and regional lines. When the notion of reconciliation is addressed in Iraq today, it refers to the urgent need for a national, inclusive compromise to end current violence, rather than to dealing with past atrocities under the Baath regime. Today's national debate in Iraq is marked by contrasting and conflicting narratives of victimhood. Each faction struggling for power in Iraq makes political use of past and current suffering to underpin its own power claims. Thus, hierarchies and competition, rather than dialogue, among different victim groups are fostered. In this climate there is little space for discourse on reconciliation and transitional justice.

So far, the national transitional justice process in Iraq has been reduced to a precipitate and later revised de-Baathification process and the trial of Saddam Hussein and his closest followers at the Iraqi High Tribunal. The dominant retributive justice concept, the related vindictive discourses and specifically the Anfal trial and the execution of Saddam Hussein and Ali Hassan al-Majid has, however, partly addressed Anfal women's wish for revenge and the punishment of the perpetrators and were important milestone in the acknowledgement of their suffering. Anfal women's urgent need for truth, evidence and the return of the victims' bodies remain, however, unaddressed, as do their claims for further punishment of further perpetrators, a reparation programme, an apology by the Iraqi government and, more generally, political acknowledgement of their suffering. There is literally no debate on Anfal at the national level. This results in Anfal women's disinterest and alienation from the national

political process in Iraq and a withdrawal to the narrow Kurdish regional context. In autumn 2012, some Anfal women, among them Suhaila, participated in a meeting with women survivors from central and southern Iraq, organized by the International Commission on Missing Persons and the Ministry of Martyrs and Anfal Affairs in Erbil and later became founding members of an Iraq wide association of mothers and wives of missing person: the Ship of Life organization - a first and promising step towards a more organized, direct exchange among survivors throughout Iraq.

## 13 Anfal women in Kurdish national discourse and policy

### *The importance of Anfal for the national Kurdish identity*

As laid out in Chapter 9, Anfal remained a rather marginal topic in Kurdish political discourse until 2003. In the 1990s, public debate was dominated by international sanctions, the struggle for international aid and protection and the internal party war over resources and local power. Only a small number of local humanitarian projects and several political activists who originally came from Anfal regions were committed to addressing Anfal survivors' needs. Political and academic publications focused on the history of the Kurdish liberation struggle, referring marginally to Anfal as one of the many catastrophes that had struck the Kurdish people.<sup>193</sup>

This changed radically in the run-up to the US-led invasion and preparations for the overthrow of the Baath regime in 2003, when Anfal became a leading argument in Kurdish

**193** See, for example, Nawshirwan Mustafa Amin's volume on the history of the Kurdish movement, published in 1999. Mustafa Amin was the leader of the left-wing KOMALA group and a *peshmerga* commander with a stronghold in the Anfal-affected regions, especially Germyan. Later, he was a member of the PUK politbureau and was often considered the second man in the PUK after Jalal Talabani, until he founded the opposition movement Goran in 2009. In his comprehensive book he dedicates only a short chapter to Anfal, describing it as »the end of the revolutionary era since 1975« (Mustafa Amin, 1999; see also Fischer-Tahir, 2012).

political parties' rationale for their active cooperation with the USA in toppling the regime and designing a political and judicial transition process.<sup>194</sup> Today, the Anfal Campaign and the gas attacks on Halabja in 1988 are a key topic in Kurdish political discourse when it comes to legitimizing Kurdish claims to autonomy rights, international protection and a share of national power in Iraq. Anfal is now a frequent topic in Kurdish politicians' speeches and the media, and high-profile politicians attend commemoration ceremonies for Anfal victims. In addition, a wealth of political, documentary and academic texts on Anfal has been published in Iraqi Kurdistan in the last years (Fischer-Tahir, 2012).

In 2006, the Kurdish Ministry of Human Rights was dissolved and replaced by the Ministry of Martyrs and Anfal Affairs. The latter was set up specifically to address the needs of poison gas victims, Anfal survivors and the families of dead *peshmerga*. It also has the task of following up the issue of mass graves and reparations with the Iraqi government.

The memory of Anfal has now become a constitutive element of Kurdish national identity. In political and public debate, Anfal is referred to as a »national tragedy, national trauma, Kurdish genocide« and »Kurdish Holocaust«.<sup>195</sup> Gaining international recognition of Anfal as genocide has become a high priority on the political agenda of the Kurdistan Regional Government.<sup>196</sup> It is also the Ministry of Martyrs and

**194** See Conference of the Iraqi Opposition (2002).

**195** See, for example, »the Kurdish Holocaust«, an interview with the then Minister of Martyrs and Anfal Affairs, Mrs Chnar Saad Abdullah, in the *Kurdish Globe*, 11 October 2007. Available at: [http://www.kurdishglobe.net/display\\_article.html?id=9A9FE9A8610908E07B1DFDDE2E77A4C6](http://www.kurdishglobe.net/display_article.html?id=9A9FE9A8610908E07B1DFDDE2E77A4C6) (last accessed 1 April 2013).

**196** See, for example, the interview with the then Minister Aram Ahmad Muhammad in the *Kurdish Globe* from 20 August 2011: »To internationally recognize those crimes as genocide is a great achievement. For this reason, a huge program is now under way to reach this goal, although it has been recognized locally as genocide in Kurdistan Region and Iraq. We have a strategic plan to hold conferences and different activities in cooperation with international and local organizations to recognize those crimes

Anfal Affairs' main aim in its efforts to intensify exchange with European and American researchers and institutions.

Andrea Fischer-Tahir (2012) has shown how the genocide concept serves to underline the exclusivity of Kurdish suffering within the national Iraqi context and thus to underpin Kurdish claims to autonomy rights and international protection. When Kurdish politicians draw a comparison between the history of the Kurds and that of the European Jews, they invoke a parallel between Israel and today's Kurdistan in terms of political weight and Western protection. Emphasizing the genocidal nature of Anfal and – consequently – the futility of resistance, this approach also helps to conceal the inner-Kurdish conflict surrounding Anfal: the disputed role of Kurdish collaborators and their amnesty in 1991 and the ambivalent role of the major Kurdish political parties during the Anfal Campaign. The hegemonic Anfal discourse describes the Kurdish nation in its entirety as the innocent victim of the Baath regime and more generally of Arab domination. In order to include victims of other occurrences of mass violence against the Kurdish people, the concept of genocide was extended to cover a decade-long »systematic attempt to cleanse the Kurdish people« (Abdullah, 2008) under the Baath regime. This rationale depicts Anfal as one of several stages of genocide on the Kurdish people and incorporates the victims of forced displacement since the 1970s and the mass killing of men from the Barzani tribe in 1983 into the genocide discourse. Indeed the latter massacre,

as genocide«. The interview is available at: <http://www.kurdishglobe.net/display-article.html?id=B9A2D23BFC0097371D57B7AABD9C0791> (last accessed 15 Feb. 2012); see also the homepage text of the Kurdistan Regional Government »About the Kurdistan Regional Government.«: (...) The victims of the Anfal genocide and the Halabja bombardment should never be forgotten. The KRG will lobby international decision makers for official recognition of the Iraqi Special Tribunal's ruling that these crimes were acts of genocide. Available at: [http://www.krg.org/articles/detail.asp?anr=32349&lngnr=12&rn=93&smap=04020000www.krg.orgof the KRG](http://www.krg.org/articles/detail.asp?anr=32349&lngnr=12&rn=93&smap=04020000www.krg.orgof%20the%20KRG) (last accessed 1 March 2012).

which took place five years before Anfal, is today frequently referred to as the »Anfal of the Barzanis«.

Today, the entire Kurdish population – independent of the direct experience of suffering – refers to Anfal as a collectively shared trauma, a key element of Kurdish legitimacy and a motor for the Kurdish national policy of self-determination. It thus constitutes what Volkan (2006) would define as a *chosen trauma*.

### *Anfal women's representation in the Kurdish national discourse on Anfal*

In the Kurdish national narrative, Anfal survivors are habitually represented as passive victims: images of defeated old men in traditional Kurdish clothes or second-generation survivors mourning their lost childhood are a regular feature in the media. The most common Anfal image, however, is that of elderly women dressed in black, wailing and lamenting, and brandishing photographs of their missing husbands and children, their faces ingrained with anguish. These images are frequently accompanied by pictures of mass graves or – more recently – burial ceremonies for Anfal victims.

In public Anfal commemoration ceremonies and at the occasions of the solemn burials of Anfal victims, Anfal women appear as a decorative row of wailing women dressed in black, often seated in the rows behind local politicians and international guests. They never make speeches at these ceremonies in the first person.

In their research on gendered representations of the Holocaust, Silke Wenk and Insa Eschebach illustrate how the specific desire to recall and tell the story of genocide mobilizes stereotyped rhetorical figures and interpretative patterns:

In support of the *one* story of the victims, gender differences of the experiences were and still are frequently lost in the editing; and in favour of »comprehensibility« and »representativity«, tra-

ditional, non-reflective, mythical images of womanhood are invoked« (Wenk & Eschebach, 2002, p. 24, the author's translation from the German).

Indeed, the representation of Anfal women as weak, passive victims and as mourning widows and mothers reflects the gender pattern of *weak women - strong men* (Fischer-Tahir, 2009) and the central role of motherhood and wifehood in the Kurdish traditional concept of womanhood.

In Kurdish national discourse, Anfal women have become a metaphor for Kurdish innocence and victimhood, national symbols of suffering that can be overcome only by national self-determination. The silence surrounding Anfal survivors' situation in the 1990s has meanwhile been fractured; but the dominant national victim discourse overwrites the concrete experiences of Anfal women and - by elevating them to national symbols of suffering - establishes them as victims rather than survivors. Their representation as national symbols hides and silences yet again their concrete experience both during and after the Anfal Campaign.

### *Neglect of testimonies and concrete experiences*

Although data collection on Anfal and other crimes is one of the principal activities of the Ministry of Martyrs and Anfal Affairs, there has been little interest up to now in collecting survivors' testimonies or »oral history« projects. The preparation of first-hand testimonies for the Iraqi High tribunal was an exception.

While images of Anfal women are omnipresent in the media, their voices and individual testimonies remain largely neglected in the public debate. They are talked about; they are not talking themselves, nor have they been talked with. This negligence reflects, on the one hand, the dominant gender concepts in Kurdish society and the overall underrepresentation of women in public debate. On the other hand, gender and class aspects are interrelated. Most Anfal survivors

are illiterate. They speak the Germyan rural dialect, which blends Kurdish with Arabic and Turkmen words and differs radically from what is today cultivated as »High Kurdish« among the urban political and academic elites. Furthermore, as shown above, their narratives are fragmented and ruptured, occasionally at odds with historical fact and confused about time and location. From the Kurdish elite's perspective, Anfal women's testimonies do not qualify to advocate the Kurdish cause and national interests. When we first invited women Anfal survivors from Germyan to meetings and conferences in Germany, we received sceptical comments from Kurdish politicians and activists both in Kurdistan and Germany such as »Why don't you invite someone more experienced to address the German public« or »These Women can only tell their individual story«, clearly revealing their foreboding that the lived experiences of Anfal survivors could undermine the Kurdish national cause.

### *Contrasting contents*

Indeed, there is a blatant contrast between the public Anfal narrative and the multi-layered testimonies of Anfal survivors – also in content. Testimonies of Anfal survivors are multi-layered accounts of violence; they include also subsequent episodes of violence, such as the exodus in 1991 and again in 1996 and the internal party war in the 1990s, and they refer to the economic hardships, social violence and political negligence they suffered after 1991 under Kurdish administration. Narratives of survivors, who describe their active role in supporting the Kurdish *peshmerga* and their distressful living conditions after Anfal, conflict with the national discourse of an innocent Kurdish nation and the current Kurdistan Regional Government's role as guarantor of a better future; they are hence avoided in the public debate. This stance is coupled with the fear that Anfal survivors might introduce sensitive issues to the debate, such as the ambivalent role of the Kurdish collaborators, who were

granted amnesty by the Kurdish parties in 1991 and some of whom are today prominent figures in Kurdish politics and the economy. Revoking the amnesty by the Kurdistan Regional Government and bringing the collaborators to justice has been a key demand of Anfal survivors since 2003. This topic not only counters the national victim discourse, but also poses a difficult challenge to the Kurdish political parties and a threat to the Kurdish region's stability. When survivors' testimonies appear in the public debate, they are cleansed of such contradictions and ambivalences and focus exclusively on the experience during Anfal: the pure atrocities of the Baath regime against the Kurds.<sup>197</sup> The official Anfal narrative is dominated by Kurdish academics and politicians, with Anfal survivor testimonies primarily milked to underpin the master narrative of Kurdish national suffering. At the International Mass Grave Conference in Erbil in 2011, not a single survivor was selected to speak. In one presentation of a Kurdish academic, whose research was based on survivors' testimonies, six survivors came on stage with him just to stay seated behind him while he spoke of their very ordeal during Anfal. During the academic's presentation, the survivors could occasionally be heard sighing loudly; one survivor started to cry along with the speaker. Without having uttered a single word, the survivors left the stage with the researcher at the end of his presentation. It was an uncanny and – to my mind – degrading mise-en-scène, in which the survivors merely functioned as a backdrop to their own life stories. When I later discussed the absence of survivors' personal testimonies and speeches with the conference organizers, they argued that the conference had to have a high academic standard if credence was to be gained in the international sphere.

**197** See, for example, the short testimonies of Anfal survivors in the Ministry of Martyrs and Anfal Affairs publication *I can't run, I am too afraid of the soldiers*, published by the Ministry of Martyr and Anfal Affairs (Seid, 2008).

*The victims' stigma*

On a more general note, exclusion from public discourse in the aftermath of violence is an experience Anfal survivors share with survivors of genocide, war and violence in other cultural and political contexts. Their experience both distinguishes and stigmatizes them. They are difficult counterparts; dealing with them means confronting the abyss of human suffering and human evil (Ottomeyer, 2011). Survivors are living monuments to a violent past, one that society prefers to leave behind. Primo Levi (1986 [1947]) and Ruth Klüger (1994) both described the experience of social stigmatization, when returning to a »normal life« after surviving concentration camps, and the manifold reactions of mistrust and avoidance in their social environment.

Kurdish society's approach to Anfal survivors is today marked by two contrasting tendencies: on the one hand, as shown above, Kurdish national identity builds on past persecution and victimhood, with the relevant narratives taking centre stage in the public debate and the media. On the other hand, Kurdish society is currently undergoing a process of economic prosperity and rapid modernization and has a strong aversion to delving into survivor realities that could overshadow a promising future. The dominant Anfal discourse burns individual suffering into a collective symbol and, as such, allows society to address Anfal without immediate exposure to the personal tribulations of individual survivors.

I have frequently heard young urban Kurds define themselves as »Anfal victims«, although they did not have any concrete experience of suffering or any Anfal survivors in their families. Their reference to the national experience is part of their self-image. At the same time, there is little knowledge of or interest in the political dimensions of Anfal, and even less when it comes to the concrete realities of Anfal survivors. Statements such as »The Anfal women should stop suffering and start to rebuild their lives« are not uncommon.

Also among politicians and members of the highly urban-centred civil society, who prominently refer to Anfal as a core experience of Kurdish people, there is a blatant lack of concrete encounter with Anfal survivors. Within the scope of my work for the Anfal memorial project, I accompanied countless artists, government officials, social workers and journalists to Rizgary and never ceased to be surprised at their almost total ignorance of the realities of life in Germyan. For many, it was their first encounter with a Kurdistan beyond the flourishing cities of Sulaimania and Erbil. In October 2011, a group of twenty Anfal women travelled to Erbil to attend the opening of an exhibition on the Anfal memorial project, hosted by the Ministry of Martyrs and Anfal Affairs. For the vast majority of visitors to the exhibition, comprised of academics, government officials and media representatives, it was obviously the first time they had occasion to speak to women Anfal survivors from Germyan face to face. And even employees of the Ministry of Martyrs and Anfal Affairs expressed surprise that »these women have mobile phones and are well able to speak and advocate their case« and were astonished at their claims for justice, whereas they had expected them to focus on economic demands. These reactions shed light on the common perception of Anfal women as ignorant, voiceless victims, whose needs do not exceed economic supplies and medical and psychological services.

### *Anfal women's voices enter the public debate*

Certainly, in the recent years, the dominant social and political discourse on Anfal has been less homogeneous and impermeable than my somewhat simplified summary might suggest. Anfal survivor voices and testimonies have gradually gained ingress to the public space, particularly since 2009. Among today's political party cadres and members of parliament there is a number of second-generation Anfal survivors, who advocate for Anfal survivors in the political arena. Civil society, women's rights groups and emerging

independent newspapers give space to Anfal survivors' voices and demands and present alternative interpretations of their role in Kurdish society. It happens that parliamentary women activists or civil society groups refer to Anfal women as resilient women who have shown that women can live without male protection and have virtually been pioneers of women's rights.<sup>198</sup> As a result of the growing unease over corruption and the abuse of power by the two dominant Kurdish parties, the PUK and the KDP, and the emergence of the opposition movement Goran, new space for debate has evolved. The opposition movement frequently refers to Anfal survivors as one example of the Kurdish elite's neglect of its people. Even these references, however, are accompanied by the absence of personal contact between political actors and Anfal women; there is a strong tendency to exploit these women in the interests of political agendas and thereby to re-victimize and disempower them.

### *Assistance and recognition*

In sharp contrast to the significance of the Anfal narrative in Kurdish political discourse, assistance to Anfal survivors was granted only with great delay. The vast number of survivors concerned was frequently quoted as the reason for this delay. Now, the figure 182,000 as the official number of Anfal victims carries considerable weight in the Kurdish national discourse. This figure was established by the Kurdistan Front in 1991 based on the number of villages destroyed during Anfal and the estimated average number of inhabitants per village. It has since become an absolute and is used in political statements, in the media and in the design of memorials. The entrance of the Anfal memorial site in the old

**198** The PUK member of parliament Suzan Shihab spoke in this manner, for example, at a debate on civil law reform I attended in October 2009 in the Kurdistan Regional Parliament in Erbil (the author's observation).

Baath secret service building in Sulaimania is for example lined with 182,000 fragments of mirrors.

Some sources, i.e. Human Rights Watch (2003) suggest that the number of some 100,000 Anfal victims is a more realistic figure. But against the background of on-going political conflict in Iraq and competing victim discourses among Sunni Arabs, Shia and Kurds, challenging the figure of 182,000 is considered sacrilege in Kurdish public debate. There is a universal fear that a debate on the exactness of the statistic would undermine the dimensions of Kurdish suffering and open the door to deniers of Anfal and of genocide (see Fischer-Tahir, 2013)

This »political statistic« becomes problematic when it leads to equally high estimates of the number of survivors in need of assistance. Figures such as »50,000 Anfal widows« or »182,000 survivors - predominantly women - in need of psychiatric help« are circulated in the media and in government press releases to emphasize the immense challenges the Kurdish government faces and the attendant demands for Iraqi national and international help.<sup>199</sup> In the past, the taboo against discussing these figures has at times blocked initiatives that would otherwise have brought more rapid assistance to those concerned. When in 2008, the Kurdistan Regional Parliament and government discussed a proposal for the construction of 10.000 houses for first-degree relatives of Anfal victims, some politicians expressed their fear,

**199** See, for example, the Ministry of Martyrs and Anfal Affairs' press release from 28 Jan. 2009 on setting up a joint mental health programme with the World Health Organization, funded by the Dutch Government. It states: »While mental health services have long been present in Baghdad, northern areas of the country have been without psychiatric facilities. There is also a recognized need for such services in northern Iraq, particularly among people traumatized by the Al-Anfal operations of the mid- to late 1980s. An assessment found that some 182,000 people had been affected, predominantly women, who faced rape, psychological abuse and physical and mental torture.« Available at: (<http://www.who.int/hac/crises/irq/releases/28jan2009/en/index.html>, last accessed 20 Feb. 2012)

that a public announcement of an initiative for such a small number of beneficiaries would seriously undercut their much larger demands for assistance at the political level.<sup>200</sup> The housing programme was, however, implemented later on, though in small stages.

Albeit with a long delay, economic assistance for Anfal survivors increased after 2007. Survivors were given land and a budget for the construction of houses; their pensions were raised. Sons and daughters of Anfal survivors have priority to be recruited for the public services, are granted scholarships and receive gifts and credits when they get married. This shift in the Kurdish government's aid policy coincided, on the one hand, with the overall economic upturn in the region and the receipt of Iraqi national government resources, made available specifically for the purpose of rehabilitating the destroyed areas. On the other hand, it was a response to growing political opposition to the major political parties and increasing protests against the neglect of Anfal survivors as an example of bad governance. Indeed, when a large-scale housing programme was finally launched in 2009, its public announcement resembled a contest between the two dominant parties with KDP and PUK representatives rushing to Anfal regions for personal announcements of the housing programme, well-covered by the local media.

So far, Kurdistan Regional Government aid for Anfal women and other survivors has consisted primarily of individual financial support. The general expectation is that once their economic situation improves, Anfal survivors will re-integrate into ordinary social life. This approach is widely reproduced by local NGOs, including the various local Anfal committees. In Sumud/Rizgary alone, three separate committees, all of them affiliated to a political party, lobby for Anfal survivors; their principal demand is economic aid and social services for their region. Local women's organizations

**200** From conversations with members of the Anfal working group at the Kurdistan Regional Parliament, 2009.

in support of Anfal survivors still have sewing workshops and income-generating projects at the top of their agenda – concepts that date back to the 1990s and seem out of place in light of the recent economic upswing in Kurdistan and the advancing age of the surviving Anfal women.

Of late there has been a larger focus on medical and psychological aid. Hospitals »specializing« in Anfal survivors have been opened in Shoresh/Chamchamal and Erbil, while the Ministry of Martyrs and Anfal Affairs is in the process of setting up »mental health centres« in several Anfal regions. The assistance to be offered at these centres has not yet been conceptualized. The mental health discourse in Iraqi Kurdistan has hitherto been dominated by medical and psychiatric views on psychological disturbances, with little attention given to more integrated psychosocial approaches. As a preliminary to establishing the centre in Rizgari, however, the Ministry has engaged in a counselling process with the Anfal Women Memorial Forum Project and thereby opened up the discussion for a centre with an empowerment-oriented approach.

Generally speaking, approaches to support Anfal survivors adopted by the Kurdistan Regional Government and civil society have so far been confined to economic aid and, more recently, to health and psychiatric assistance, once again reducing the survivors to needy victims and passive beneficiaries.

The strong focus on financial assistance not only fails to address Anfal survivors' vital need for truth, justice and compensation, social and political recognition and – importantly – respect; as I will show later, it also leads to new disparities and rivalry among survivors. There is little or no debate in Kurdistan on how to strengthen resources and social structures relevant to Anfal survivors. Instead, the national victim narrative and the political exploitation of Anfal survivors patronize and further disempower them, and – in case of women Anfal survivors – interacts with their own self-perception as passive victims, perpetuating it in the process.

In the following chapters, I will show however, how socio-economic changes in the concrete life situations of Anfal women in Sumud/Rizgary after 2003 have helped them to rebuild their lives. Today female survivors of Anfal have begun to unfold their own narratives, competing with and challenging the hegemonic Kurdish national victim discourse on Anfal.

## **14 Changes in Anfal women's social realities after 2003**

While Anfal women continue to live with uncertainty about the fate of their relatives and their claims to truth, justice and acknowledgement have largely remained unaddressed, their concrete living conditions have changed dramatically since the fall of the Baath regime. In this chapter I will show the changes in their social and economic life conditions after 2003 and how they reconstruct their social realities within a rapidly transforming social and political context.

### **14.1 Safety, mobility and economic recovery**

The Iraqi constitution of 2005 established the Kurdish region as a state within a federal Iraq. The hitherto separate Kurdish administrations in Sulaimania and Erbil unified to form one Kurdistan Regional Government. Unlike the conflict-ridden regions of southern and central Iraq, the Kurdish region enjoyed relative security and rapid economic recovery in subsequent years. Among women Anfal survivors, this and the trials and executions of the main perpetrators of Anfal restored a sense of safety and political stability for the first time after decades of fear and violence.

In the Germyan region, the intimidating frontline that cut through the area for twelve years disappeared. Roads leading to Germyan cities, towns and villages previously under Iraqi control were now open, allowing the people of Germyan to finally reunite with relatives and friends in places like Khanaqin, Tuz Khurmatu and Kirkuk. For the first time since the Anfal Campaign in 1988, families were able to visit their home

villages in areas previously controlled by the Iraqi regime. A number of families from villages close to main roads or district centres returned for good; others were able to access their land and either cultivate or sell it to generate income.

Although it remained a neglected area in comparison with the flourishing regions surrounding the urban centres of Sulaimania, Erbil and Dohuk, the Germyan region was party to the overall economic boom. Administrative structures and public services were extended and provided government employment for young men and women from the region; the Kurdish-Canadian Western Zagros Consortium started to exploit Germyan oil reserves, which created job opportunities and stimulated the market. Investment by the Kurdistan Regional Government in Germyan's infrastructure produced jobs in the construction and communication sectors.

The Kurdish government and Kurdish political parties rewarded their respective clientele by distributing land and granting pensions to former *peshmerga* and the families of *peshmerga* who had been killed, the *aile shehid* (martyr families). Anfal women whose missing husbands had fought in the liberation movement likewise benefited from these payments.

The Germyan region had previously belonged to the Kirkuk governorate. A great number of Germyan families now registered as Kirkuk citizens and were thus entitled to compensation from the Iraqi government for forced displacement, as provided for in §140 of the Iraqi constitution.<sup>201</sup> They were encouraged to do so by the Kurdistan Regional Government, whose ulterior motive was to increase the number of Kurdish Kirkuk citizens in a bid to underpin its claim to the city. Quite a number of Anfal women received a compensation of approximately 10,000 US-Dollar in this context.

**201** For the full text of the Iraqi Constitution, see [http://www.uniraq.org/documents/iraqi\\_constitution.pdf](http://www.uniraq.org/documents/iraqi_constitution.pdf) (last accessed 1 April 2013).

## 14.2 Government assistance to Anfal survivors

Non-partisan Anfal survivors did not explicitly belong to the clientele of Kurdish political parties, and it would be another four years before the Ministry of Martyrs and Anfal Affairs introduced a series of laws in 2007 to improve their economic situation. The delay was a source of disappointment and anger to Anfal women, who, in the initial years following the downfall of the Baath regime, complained bitterly about government negligence despite the availability of funds.

In 2007, Anfal survivor pensions were raised substantially and have since undergone regular adjustment to reach the equivalent of the initial salary of a teacher or public employee.

In 2008, the Kurdistan Regional Government set up a housing programme for Anfal survivors, awarding them a piece of land and a budget of some 23,000 US-Dollar to cover the cost of building a solid three- to four-room cement house with space for a yard.

The increase in pensions and the distribution of houses has undoubtedly put an end to Anfal survivors' struggle for survival and done much to improve their standard of living. Owning property and having an income meant much more to them than simply the termination of financial destitution. It marked the first step towards recognition by the Kurdistan Regional Government and constituted a victory over the Baath regime's attempt to annihilate them. As Suhaila (2011) said

Houses are not just walls and a bed; they're a place of your own, they're property you can leave to your children in the future; you can have guests in a house, you can offer your relatives from Kirkuk a place to sleep when they come to see you; you can say, »This is my house, this is our place.«

On the other hand, the pension scheme and the housing system produced disparities and injustices within the Anfal survivor community. It is undoubtedly a huge challenge to set up a pension and compensation scheme for Anfal survivors

that is just. Every Anfal victim left family members behind: wives or husbands survived with their children; in other cases couples survived all of their children; there were men and women, like Kafia, who survived their entire family. The pension system adopted by the Kurdistan Regional Government essentially pursued the logic of »one murdered or missing Anfal victim – one pension«, benefiting one first-degree relative of each victim. Husbands and wives of Anfal victims are entitled to a pension; if they too are dead or for some reason reject the pension, the entitlement is passed on to the victim's eldest son or daughter or – if there are no children – to the victim's parents and only if none of these closest relatives is alive to the brothers and sisters of the victims. This arrangement fails to address the life situation and needs of many survivors: a male victim's wife with several children to support and his equally needy mother cannot both apply for pensions; Anfal survivors who did not lose relatives during Anfal but suffered deportation, detention and torture are not eligible for the pension scheme. Women like Salima, for example, who survived detention in Nugra Salman jail with her husband, but lost a child there, were neither entitled to an Anfal pension, nor – as civilian women – considered »political prisoners«, nor given land or housing. Only in 2011, after years of struggling for recognition, were they considered eligible for pensions as »political prisoners«. During my recent visits to Rizgary, numerous Anfal women, who had been detained in Nugra Salman, were busy with their attendant pension applications, but faced the difficulty of proving their detention. They were required to submit evidence of the fact. Although clearly some documentary evidence of eligibility for pensions is needed, some women were outraged or felt humiliated by the extent of disbelief on the part of the government officials concerned.

The distribution of land and houses followed similar criteria but was split into several categories. Anfal women without husbands and men who had lost their wives and children were the first priority. These were followed by the parents and children of Anfal victims. Again, only one (usually the

eldest) son or daughter of an Anfal victim was eligible for the scheme, so that siblings had to agree among themselves how to share the allotted land and housing budget.

The inadequacies and shortcomings of the pension and housing schemes are today a topic of endless debate among Anfal survivors. When they meet, Anfal women spend a lot of time exchanging news of the most recent »injustices« suffered by their neighbours, cousins or relatives who have been denied support. Women like Habsa, who has brought up six children, protest at now having to share a house with their children and grandchildren, while »other women sit all alone in a huge house«. Women like Payman, who lost her husband and five children, complain that they receive the same pension as women who lost only their husbands but can now rely on support from grownup sons. The women feel disconcerted that former *jash* should be entitled to a pension or given a house. In fact, a number of former members of the Kurdish militia lost their wives or their children during Anfal and are now registered as Anfal survivors and therefore eligible for pensions. That a *jash* might receive the same or a larger pension than they do is a source of anger and bitterness to many Anfal women (see Chapter 15).<sup>202</sup> Other complaints refer to corruption in the distribution system: government officials have been accused of lining their own pockets with funds allocated to Anfal survivors and of privileging members of their respective parties and clans with pensions and other benefits. Local Anfal survivor associations in Rizgary currently do little more than deal with pension and housing issues and the relevant complaints and petitions.

In response to the many grievances concerning the criteria for pensions and housing, the Kurdistan Regional Gov-

**202** In this regard, Choman Hardi (2011, p. 150) quotes Ruqia, who says: »The government (KRG) has given houses to *jash* and not to me ... they divided houses here and gave them to *jash*, those who killed *pehsmarga* (sic!), those who are rich ... and I live amongst scorpions.«

ernment regularly makes adjustments. Ex-detainees from Nugra Salman are meanwhile eligible for a pension and have been promised inclusion in the housing programme; women and men who lost more than three family members to Anfal are granted a double pension to distinguish them from families who lost only one relative. Furthermore, the wife and the mother of a victim are each entitled to apply for a pension. A regulation stipulating that women on Anfal pensions for their missing fathers would lose the entitlement once they marry has recently been revised. Brothers and sons of male Anfal victims who can prove that they take care of their mothers can apply for additional financial support.

Yet the system continues to be based on the number of victims rather than on an assessment of the actual living circumstances of the survivors. This leads to shortages where several family members are obliged to share a pension, to family conflict when children compete with their mothers for a share of the pension and to social envy and competition among survivors in general.

While Anfal survivors' unending complaints about government aid on the one hand reflect the concrete inadequacies of the system, they are on the other hand, an expression of bitterness about the previous years of negligence, an experience that cannot suddenly be obliterated by a pension scheme or a housing programme. The government approach of focusing exclusively on economic aid has failed to address what is at the heart of Anfal survivors' multiple complaints: their strong demand for recognition and respect to restore their confidence and self-esteem.

### **14.3 The reconstruction of social and family structures**

Despite their insufficiencies, the economic assistance programmes introduced in recent years have gone a long way to improving most Anfal women's lives: most of the women in Rizgary have now a regular income and own some property.

Moreover, the sons and daughters of Anfal women are now grown up. Quite a number of them have completed school or even university and work in professional positions. Others have set up shops or small businesses or cultivate the land of their fathers that had lain fallow for many years in their home villages. The Kurdistan Regional Government issued a decree giving young people from Anfal families an employment priority in the public sector. Daughters and sons of Anfal victims are also entitled to academic scholarship or start-up loans to set up a business. Those who marry receive a grant to set up a household.

Today, second-generation Anfal survivors can support their mothers economically and, in addition, are carriers of social change. By marrying and starting their own family, they restore lively family contexts around their mothers and assign them new social roles as mothers-in-law and grandmothers. Today, women Anfal survivors and their offspring reconstruct their social and family structures.

In the 1990s, female Anfal survivors constituted a large group of women without men, who shared precarious conditions. Their once homogeneous living conditions gradually became more differentiated in the changing economic and social context, in accordance with the number of children they had and the financial and social support they enjoyed.

The following description of the current economic and social circumstances of a number of Anfal women is therefore structured in terms of individual women, not of categories. In Chapter 15, I will then describe how these social and economic changes impact on the same women's psychological situation and coping strategies. There will inevitably be some repetitions in the following two chapters and recurrences with the short biographies of the women in chapter 5.

*Habsa* managed to raise three daughters and three sons on her own. Today, two of her sons are teachers; one has a shop at the market. Her three sons and two of her daughters are married; the youngest daughter is about to take her university degree in English. *Habsa* has seven grandchildren. She lives with her unmarried daughter and her youngest

son and his wife in one of the older Rizgary houses with two rooms, a separate kitchen and a large courtyard with plants and trees. She passed the government housing grant on to her two older sons, who topped up the budget and built a spacious, well-equipped two-storey house opposite their mother's house. With her Anfal pension, an additional pension from one of the political parties for her long-standing partisanship and financial support from her sons, Habsa now has the income and the time to entertain guests and to travel. Her house is always full of guests and full of laughter. Photographs of her husband and her son, both missing, hang on the wall of the living room. Habsa is now fifty-nine years old and always busy. Since the collapse of the Baath regime, she has been on several pilgrimages to Mecca and Medina. She dropped her partisanship with the PUK and is currently engaged in the opposition movement, Goran, where she voices her disappointment at the major Kurdish parties' neglect of Anfal survivors. She is actively involved in the memorial project and in this context visited Germany with Suhaila in 2009. She gives interviews and attends public meetings. She claims she feels good today, albeit on many occasions, especially when she sees pictures of mass graves on television, she is overwhelmed by pain.

*Amira* survived the Dibs detention camp with her daughter and three sons. Today she lives in a new three-room house in the *gereki enfalakan*, a housing complex assigned to Anfal survivors close to the main road of Rizgary. She topped up the government housing grant with money she had inherited from her father and the compensation she received as a citizen of Kirkuk. She shares the house and her pension with her two younger sons, one of whom is married with two children and works with the traffic police. The other one is unemployed. *Amira's* eldest son took a university degree and works as an engineer in the city. He gives financial support to his mother, whose Anfal pension alone would not cover the needs of a six-person household. *Amira's* daughter is married to a government employee in a nearby town and has three children.

Amira is now fifty-one years old. The impression she gave in the 1990s of hardness and bitterness is no longer visible. She appears more relaxed. With great satisfaction she shows visitors around her new spacious and light-flooded house, which has decoratively tiled floors and a well-equipped kitchen. She is proud of her children and takes care of her grandchildren, with whom she has an affectionate relationship. She feels respected by her children, but is worried about her younger son's unemployment. But »Anfal is always there,« she says (see Chapter 15).

*Faima* survived Nugra Salman with her daughter and five sons. One son died in an accident in 1998 – ten years after Anfal. Today Faima lives in a new house on the outskirts of Rizgary with two of her sons, their wives and three grandchildren. The eight-person household survives on Faimas Anfal pension and the small salaries of her sons, one of whom is a policeman and the other a security guard in a construction company. Faima has additional income from her part-time job as a janitor in a nearby school.

Her one-storey house has plenty of space. The floor in the living room is covered with elaborately patterned tiles and the small garden is well kept. Faima's two daughters-in-law are beautiful young women who like to dress in bright colours. They do the housework. The atmosphere in Faima's house is quiet but harmonious. Whenever I see her, however, she seems sad and depressed and incessantly complains about the Kurdish government's negligence of the Anfal survivors. She had a back operation and has difficulty walking and sitting down. At night she is inundated with images of sand being shovelled over her dead brother's body; she describes her heart as black, heavy and full of fear.

*Rabea* survived Anfal with her six children. During the exodus of 1991, she was seriously injured by a landmine, but was miraculously reunited with her six children after her recovery. Now grown up, her three sons work in the public sector. Rabea left Rizgary to live with two of her sons, their wives and her five grandchildren in a modern, well-equipped two-storey house on the outskirts of Kalar. Her third son

lives in the vicinity with his wife and children; her daughters have all »married away«. Rabea organizes the household and takes care of the children. She is now in her sixties, a warm-hearted woman, strong and calm in the midst of her sons, daughters-in-law and grandchildren. Although satisfied with her circumstances today, she misses the company of other Anfal women in Rizgary.

*Hataw* returned from Nugra Salman with five children and raised them on her own. Her two daughters have meanwhile »married away«. One of her sons lives somewhere else and has little contact with his mother. She left Rizgary to live in a modest, old-style town house in Kalar with her two other sons, who are both policemen. Since her pension does not cover her household needs, she works as a housekeeper at the hospital. Hataw is now fifty-nine years old. Her greatest wish is to stop working and take a rest, but she feels obliged to continue in order to secure her own and her family's financial circumstances. Though she suffers from severe heart problems, she says she feels in good health and calm, since she has testified at the trial of Saddam Hussein. But, she says, she can never forget the images of her daughter and her son, both dying in her arms.

*Payman* lost her husband and five of her children during Anfal and survived with only one daughter. Her daughter is meanwhile in her late twenties, has no job and lives with her mother. Payman was allocated a piece of land in the centre of Kalar, but says she could not go to live there without husbands or sons. Payman sold her land and invested in the extension and furnishing of her mother's house in Rizgary. She lives now with her mother, her daughter, her brother and the latter's wife and two children. The seven-person household lives on Payman's Anfal pension and her brother's small income from occasional employment. The atmosphere in the house is relaxed and respectful. When I visit Payman she immediately brings tea and biscuits, jokes with her brother's children and is generally good-humoured. When talk turns to Anfal, however, she is full of bitterness and ire. She feels betrayed by the government and let down by her missing

husband's relatives, who at the same time interfere in her life.

*Suhaila* raised her only daughter without family support. She sold the piece of land she was allocated by the government, moved into a modest, three-room house near the market of Rizgary and used the construction budget from the government to renovate and furnish it. The house is painted purple and orange, has a large bathroom, a fully equipped kitchen and a guest room. She grows herbs in the small garden and experiments with all kinds of flowers. *Suhaila* has a monthly Anfal pension. Her daughter completed her university degree, is now a teacher and married to a colleague, who does not come from an Anfal family. They have two children and live with *Suhaila*, a family constellation that breaks with patrilocal patterns in traditional German society, where sons usually take their wives to live at their fathers' home. The family survives on *Suhaila's* Anfal pension, her daughter's and her son-in-law's salaries. They enjoy a certain amount of mobility, since *Suhaila* - although she cannot drive - bought a car soon after the collapse of the Baath regime in 2003. *Suhaila* is proud of her daughter and takes care of her grandchildren with great energy and affection. She quit her work with the PUK women's union to »finally get some rest«. She still sees herself as representing Anfal women, attends meetings and gives interviews. A founding member of the Anfal Memorial Forum Project, she came to Germany several times to speak at conferences and visit memorial sites. After a pilgrimage to Mecca, she discarded her dark headscarf and has worn a white one since then. *Suhaila* says she now feels at ease; yet there are moments when she is suddenly engulfed by memories and anxiety.

#### 14.4 Social reconstruction along patrilineal family patterns - differentiation and individualization

In the context of social and economic transformation that began in 2003, most Anfal women are reconstructing their families, social structures and practices. As the examples above show, this social reconstruction process develops largely around the traditional concept of family. The extended family is a central reference point in the women's effort to restore their social networks. Exchanging news and stories about extended kin is a prominent and time-consuming topic of conversation whenever they meet; rebuilding relationships even to fourth- and fifth-degree relatives is of great importance. Making references such as *khoum mina* (he/she is from my tribe/clan) or *ême yek xwênin* (we are of one blood) are frequent in this context. By attesting to the existence of an extended family context, they also assert the failure of the Baath regime to annihilate them. As Suhaila (2011) once said:

Saddam wanted to destroy the people of Germyan. But we are still here and our children are still here.

And Naila (2012), whose daughter Nishtiman died during Anfal, points out the feelings of satisfaction and peace she draws from her newly developing family context:

Today, my daughter has a little girl. We called her Nishtiman. I wanted her to carry that name. My daughter said, mother, this will make your heart ache. But I said, no, name the girl Nishtiman. And today, when the little girl runs towards me, my heart is quiet. And when a new child is born in our family, I think (she looks upward), »God, this is your will«.

The life constellations of Anfal women today follow patrilineal and patrilocal patterns. Women who have grownup sons usually live with them, while their daughters »marry away«, as in the case of Habsa, Amira, Faima, Hataw and Rabea. Those who have no sons - like Payman - tend to live with one of their brothers or with their fathers' extended kin.

Constellations that break the patrilocal pattern, such as that of Suhaila, her daughter and her son-in-law, remain an exception. Suhaila's daughter says she married on condition that she would stay with her mother.

How could I leave my mother on her own after everything she's done for me? (Gulistan 2010).

However, the unusual constellation is a source of latent tension and gossiping in the community:

Yes, people talk about it, of course. They say, »How can his father agree?« When they first got married they went to live with his father for a few months before they moved to live with me. That was a mark of respect. (...).

Some people even said to me: How can you agree to raise somebody else's blood? I got angry. I said, »What are you talking about? My daughter is my blood; my granddaughter is my blood. This is my family« (Suhaila, 2011).

I have not come across any constellations of Anfal women sharing houses or living with non-relatives.

A small number of women got married once they had ascertained the death of their husbands in Anfal or when their children had grown up. One of them is Nasrin, whom I met at Payman's house in 2011. Born in a village in the Dawde region in 1974, Nasrin was forced to marry a much older man when she was fourteen – three months before the Anfal Campaign was launched.

I did not want to be with him, but my brothers forced me (...) three months later, Anfal happened, and eight months after that I gave birth to twins. I have been bringing them up for seventeen years (Nasrin, 2011).

In the aftermath of Anfal, she lived with her children in her brother's house. She did not work.

I have never seen anything good in my life. My life is black, like this (she points to her black headscarf) (Nasrin, 2011).

Now in her late thirties, she is still strikingly beautiful. In 2005, she married a man who already had a wife and eight children. »His wife agreed,« she says. (Some women nearby who were following our conversation commented, »What choice did she have?«) »We have two separate households and no arguments.« Her children, who are now married, also agreed to this arrangement, she says, but »the male relatives of my former husband are always stirring up trouble. They go around telling everyone I'm a bad woman.« Twenty-three years after Anfal, Nasrin is still confronted with social sanctions for her perceived lack of loyalty to a man she was forced to marry and had merely lived with for three months.

#### *Anfal women without family support*

Since the reconstruction of social structures evolves along family lines, women who have no close relatives to rely on fall through the support net. Some, like Jamina, end up living with distant relatives in what could be termed a conflict situation. I met Jamina in the 1990s when she was a young unmarried woman in her mid-twenties. Her entire family was deported during Anfal; she herself had jumped from the deportation truck at the last minute, knocked out a soldier and escaped. Her sisters and brothers were killed; her parents returned in the wake of Anfal but died shortly after »of grief«, as Jamina always said. She never married and now lives with one of her murdered brothers' sons, who perceives her as a burden and treats her badly. Women from the Anfal memorial project told me: »He takes her pension and gives her nothing for herself. She's always wearing tattered clothes. The neighbours say he beats her and says to her all the time: »Why didn't you get married, why are you sitting around here?« (work protocols, 2011)

Kafia lost twenty-two family members and survived on her own. Today she is financially well-off; other Anfal women use to say, »She's rich.« She was given land and a construction budget, and has regular monthly payments that ensue

from her Anfal pension and from the PUK for previous partisanship. She donated the land and the money to the local mosque and lives in a shabby old hut. »I don't want to be in the house of Anfal,« she says (Kafia, 2010). She is often seen wandering through the town. As she gets older, walking is difficult. For this reason, she recently bought a car, employing a driver to chauffeur her around. She is frequently invited to other Anfal women's houses, but in their midst becomes anxious and begins to sing lamentations about her missing brothers. Although the other women urge her to take care of herself and build a small house she can keep clean, she refuses. She shares her provisional dwelling with chickens and goats, to which she talks, claiming, »This is my family.« Undoubtedly confused, she is referred to by the other women as *nakba*<sup>203</sup> (miserable or hopeless) or simply *shêt* (crazy).

On our rounds from house to house in Rizgary to invite Anfal survivors to the memorial project, we came across a number of mostly elderly women like Kafia. They live alone in dilapidated dwellings and have only loose connections to distant relatives. One of them is Akhtar, a woman who now spends much of her time at the memorial project office simply for the company. When she talks, she frequently conjures up the same image: the loss of her three sons and a daughter during Anfal. Her husband survived Anfal but died in the 1990s. The daughter, when deported, had already had five children and was pregnant with her sixth. Akhtar herself managed to hide during Anfal and declares: »I was so happy I had a daughter, because I thought she at least would come back to me« (work protocol memorial project, 2009). Her daughter never returned. Akhtar is engulfed in images of and fantasies about her fate.

Najiba comes regularly to the memorial project office. A tiny woman dressed entirely in black, Najiba's face is heavily wrinkled. When she first came to the office, we asked about

**203** From the Arabic word *nakba* - catastrophe, misery.

her family situation. She had no idea how old she was and, following a detailed search of her handbag, produced her identity card and an Anfal pension card, both of which revealed that she was in fact in her seventies. In a quiet voice, she listed the relatives she had lost to Anfal: »My brother is Anfal, my sisters ... Nawzad is Anfal, Hussein is Anfal, my sister Naim is Anfal ...« Her voice lowered with each name. After several names, she became confused, unable to tell which of her relatives had died during Anfal and which of them had died later. My young male colleague from Sulaimania who interviewed her passed the data sheet to me, left the room and burst into tears. I asked Najiba if she too had been detained in Nugra Salman. »No,« she said, »my mother was there, my siblings, my husband. But I wasn't there. Should I lie? No, I escaped it. God did not give me the mercy of death. I survived« (Najiba, 2010). She seemed utterly confused. She did not know whether she had a telephone, and she knew nothing about the memorial project, she just came to see other survivors. Looking at the photographs of other Anfal women and men on the office walls, she said, »I know them all, they're all Anfals« (work protocol memorial project, 2010).

Everyone in Rizgary knows Kafia, Akhtar and Najiba. They are the *takani* – those who survived alone. Other Anfal women invite them to their houses, chat with them and occasionally accompany them to a health centre. Since social reconstruction focuses on the family concept, *takani* women are becoming more and more isolated. There are currently no psychosocial assistance programmes in place to address the specific needs of these women and help them to organize their daily lives.

### 14.5 The ambivalent role of second-generation Anfal survivors

For Habsa, Amira, Rabea, Suhaila, Faima and Hataw, their grownup children are a source of pride and satisfaction. They describe their relations with their children as one of respect. Faima (2011) says:

Thank God my sons are good to me. When I sit here and cry or stare into space, they come and say, »Mother, don't worry too much.« They take me to the doctor and say I should rest. They're good to me.

And Rabea (2012):

Not for all the world would I change my sons, They are good to me. We have no problems.

Many second-generation Anfal survivors express admiration for their mothers and have a sense of obligation towards them. Suhaila's daughter Gulistan, who insisted that she and her husband live with her mother, says: »How could I leave my mother on her own after everything she's done for me« (Gulistan, 2010). Habsa's sons and daughters undoubtedly see their mother as the centre of the family and do everything to protect and assist her. Her daughter Halala does the cooking and will not allow her mother to do any household chores. Rabea's daughters-in-law fulfil her wishes with affection and admiration. Amira's eldest son works in the city and supports his mother financially. He also visits her regularly to ensure that his brothers, who live with her, treat her well.

Second-generation Anfal survivors play an important role in bringing their mother's fate and their dire circumstances in the aftermath of Anfal to the public debate. Roshna (2004) speaks for many when she declares:

Our mothers raised us on their own, with no support. They carried firewood on their backs from those mountains over there and people gave them about fifteen Dinar a day. That's how we

were brought up. My mother didn't have a husband or anything. And my mother – and not only her, but thousands like her – is old now. There should be a place for her and people like her, where she'd be looked after, where nobody could send them away, where nobody could insult them.

Some women, however, have more contentious relations with their children. Amira (2010) says, »Other women in our street are in clinch with their children over the house« and I personally came across numerous cases of Anfal women at loggerheads with their sons and daughters about their share of the pension and the house. I met Wazira,<sup>204</sup> for example, today in her sixties, who lost her husband and a daughter during Anfal and raised two sons. When she was assigned a house in 2010, her sons sold it against her will and shared the proceeds, while she continues to live in a two-room shabby dwelling.

Moreover, there is a general tendency among grownup sons of Anfal women to take over the male command. They assume the role of patriarchs in the family and redefine their mothers' place at home. These women, who struggled for survival autonomously for so many years, see themselves today once again restricted in their mobility and range of agency by their sons. Faima asks her sons for permission to go to the market. Several Anfal women involved in the memorial project have to negotiate with their sons in order to attend meetings, give interviews or make trips to Sulaimania and Erbil. It proved difficult to find women to travel to Germany within the project, as the sons of a number of women or other male relatives opposed it.

The memorial forum project has become a space for discussion about the conflict between Anfal women and their sons or other male relatives. Some young male survivors defend their mothers' commitment and see it as valuable

psychological and social support. As the son of a particularly active woman declared in a meeting:

Now that our living conditions have improved, now that our mothers can stop thinking about how to get bread for the next day, life has become really difficult for them. It is only now that they are beginning to think about their own lives, to realize what they have lost. It is now that they really need support. And they need to be busy (work protocol, 2010)

There are other sons of Anfal women, however, who argue against their mothers' involvement in the project. They consider them incapable of discussing a memorial (»What do they know about art?«) or claim, »They have houses and families now. They can relax, stay at home and take care of the children. Why should they tire themselves out, speak in public and attract trouble?« (ibid.).

More generally, a great many sons of Anfal women see their mothers' engagement in public as *ayb*, i.e. shameful and damaging to their own honour. They feel ashamed when their mothers talk about detention, torture and sexual violence or even when they allude to their struggle for survival during the 1990s.

Women in the memorial project told me the following story: When they were asked to contribute to an article on the manifold works Anfal women had taken up in the 1990s to raise their children, they approached a woman who had then constructed so-called *tenurs* – cement bread ovens, a quite heavy work requiring bodily strength. The woman concerned agreed and shared a photo of herself from that time. One day later, however, she phoned in an agitated state. Her son had threatened to kill her if her photo was published and her name made known. The photo was withdrawn, but the other Anfal women were outraged: »This son survived only because his mother built these ovens. Now she is to be silenced and he is ashamed of her. What is that?« (work protocols, 2011).

Interference in Anfal women's activities is not confined to their sons; relatives and neighbours feel likewise entitled

to control their movements. When Payman gave a television interview, she was bothered for weeks by neighbours and relatives: »People here don't understand,« she says. »They keep making fun of me. They say ›Hey, Payman, we saw you on television.‹ Distant relatives of my husband phoned me from Chamchamal and said, ›Why do you talk on television, that's *ayb* for all of us‹« (Payman, 2010).

Yet it would be misleading to assume that Anfal women clearly reject their sons' or other male relatives' paternalist attitude. Weary from the harsh struggle for survival, many of them desire to sit back, be provided for and and take a well-earned rest. They are torn between longing for a male provider on the one hand, and, on the other hand, nostalgia for the days when they worked in dense collective female structures. This ambivalence translates into an ambivalent attitude towards and sporadic participation in initiatives such as the Anfal memorial project. Women like Suhaila and Habsa, on the other hand, are incensed by the paternalist tendencies of male relatives. Suhaila and I once visited an Anfal woman, who said she had to ask her sons before making a decision to accompany us to Erbil to see the exhibition on the memorial project. Suhaila later confided to me:

Look, those women who are now doing what their sons dictate - it's their own fault. They should be telling their sons that we made a great many sacrifices to bring them up. Then they should leave the house whenever they want. Listen, I do it. Habsa does it. But look at this woman: She's a grown woman. She raised six children and now keeps asking her sons, »Can I, should I, have I permission to do this or that?« It's her own fault. Why does she ask them? (Suhaila, 2011).

After decades of emergency status, when women bore the brunt of working and bringing up their children, the social reconstruction process re-establishes patriarchal family structures and largely reconfirms traditional values and gender concepts that once again cement Anfal women's victim role. Yet while some second-generation survivors re-install patriarchal patterns, others support their mothers'

mobility and are proud of their mothers' strength and resources, thereby challenging the traditional gender concept and the victim discourse around their mothers. It could be argued that the situation of Anfal women is becoming a reference point for a larger debate on the transformation of traditional patriarchal social structures in Anfal communities. A number of Anfal women and second-generation survivors are in the process of contesting attitudes of victimhood and paternalism towards Anfal women, and thus contribute to the wider debate on social transformation in Kurdistan-Iraq.

#### **14.6 Rizgary - a transforming location between past and present**

With the reconstruction of economic and family structures, the town of Rizgary has undergone a process of rapid transformation in the last few years. Beyond individual financial assistance to Anfal survivors, the Kurdistan Regional Government has invested in infrastructure in Rizgary since 2008/2009. Recent years saw repairs and extensions of the connecting roads to Rizgary, as well as the asphaltting and illumination of streets in the town itself. Health centres, schools and administrative buildings were repaired and/or newly constructed and water and sewage systems modernized. Today, Rizgary has a public library, football fields and other sports facilities and several parks and green areas. Several hundred so-called *mali enfalakan* - new houses for Anfal survivors - mushroomed in Rizgary within a few years. Most of them are solid one-storey houses or, where survivors were in a position to top up the government grant, two-storey houses. Most of them were built in specifically assigned streets and housing complexes or so-called *gereki enfalakan* (Anfal quarters) close to the road linking Kalar with Kifri. Rizgary has gradually lost its detention camp character and been transformed into a busy medium-sized town, which is now spreading towards the equally expanding nearby district centre of Kalar. From a scenario dominated by black-

clothed women and children in extreme poverty in the 1990s, Rizgary has today transformed into a vibrant, multi-generational townscape.

Anfal women's access to services in this changing context has increased, as have their mobility and their public presence. They can now be seen walking in groups, even after nightfall, in the illuminated streets of Rizgary. They use public transport to visit relatives in Kalar and Kifri or even Kirkuk. They organize wedding ceremonies for their children and grandchildren and attend picnics in public parks or green spots around Rizgary on public holidays. They use mobile phones to remain in touch with their relatives and each other. Step by step, they are reconstructing social realities in a rapidly transforming context.

In an interview in 1999, Suhaila said: »Look at this place, look at this Sumud. It's a place for horses, not human beings.« When I visit her today, she proudly takes me on a tour of the town and the market, stopping at every shop for a chat, and treats me to a *motta* (ice cream).

Look, this is Sumud today (she still calls it by its former camp name and never uses its current name Rizgary). We have everything here. If you need plates, cups ... Over there they have chickens. If I need a chicken, I just come here and buy one. Then I pluck it and throw it into the pot. If I need a piece of soap, I can buy it here. I can buy flour, rice and lentils. We have all we need here now. Look, we have streetlights, we can walk around here without being afraid. People can go for a walk in Sumud! We take a walk and look at the new houses. We say, »Look, Gulistan has painted her house pink and Mohammed has done his one in green.« We see how everyone is doing ... (conversation notes after a walk through Rizgary in October 2010).

Every time I have come to Rizgary in recent years, I have been surprised by the changes I see. Frequently I bring visitors with me and suddenly realize that they cannot comprehend the sense of tristesse I associate with Rizgary, shaped by my knowledge of the decades of horror related to this former detention camp. Visitors just see a bustling, medium-

sized town, of which there are many throughout the Kurdish region; it takes a second look to see the pain that overshadows people's lives and relationships, the scars of violence in the townscape. I find myself consciously looking for these signs to show them to visitors, to make them understand what happened here. Anfal women express similarly ambivalent feelings in many of their daily conversations: on the one hand, they welcome and enjoy progress and change in Rizgary; on the other hand, change poses a threat to Anfal women, who see the memory of Anfal victims and their own violent experience in danger of being overwritten and forgotten. The relationship of Rizgary's people to the cemetery, where those Anfal victims hitherto exhumed from massgraves were buried, serves to illustrate this ambivalent stance. The cemetery is situated on a small hill on the outskirts of Rizgary and visible from all over the town. Planned as the burial ground for three thousand Anfal victims when all of the mass graves will have been examined, this dusty, sandy area is surrounded by a fence and has a large iron entrance gate. In 2011, the Kurdistan Regional Government built a four-lane asphalt road stretching for one kilometre and linking the cemetery with the town. The road is lit up at night by the tall streetlamps common, for example, on Turkish or French motorways. From my perspective, this ghostly scenario of a hypermodern road that ends in a desolate graveyard stood as one of many examples of the Kurdish government's obsession with monumental construction that ignores the real needs of Anfal survivors. When I visited Suhaila in October 2011, however, she and her daughter suggested after dinner, »Let's go to the cemetery,« and laughed at my surprise about a trip to the cemetery after nightfall. »Yes, let's go there, the cemetery is now our *sahol*,« alluding to a high street in Sulaimania with restaurants and shops that stay open until late at night. In other words: »It is our Champs Élysées.« It was a warm autumn night and crowds of people were either driving or parading along the illuminated cemetery road, some even sitting at the side of the road having tea and nuts. When I later described the scene to Kurdish

friends in Sulaimania, they reacted with a mixture of amusement and indignation at the »poor neglected German people with only a cemetery road for leisure«. My own associations were different. Apart from the fact that the cemetery road was the first broad illuminated road in Rizgary und thus a symbol for modernity and progress, I saw people's use of the road for leisure also as a metaphor for the inner strife of the inhabitants of Rizgary between a painful past and a newly emerging present. It likewise represents their attempts to reconstruct a social life, while retaining the memory of past suffering. As I will demonstrate in the following, many Anfal survivors struggle with the ambivalence between holding on to victimhood as a distinguishing collective identity, on the one hand, and the desire to develop new life perspectives, on the other.

#### **14.7 Summary: Social reconstruction and the erosion of collective structures**

After 2003, political stability and the economic upturn in the Kurdish region improved Anfal women's life situation significantly, as did the establishment of economic aid programmes for Anfal survivors. After decades of poverty, these women now have housing and an income, and those who have children or close relatives to rely on live in a lively multi-generational family context. They have finally begun to relax, reconstruct social practices and relate to the rapidly transforming context and townscape of Rizgary.

At the same time, the reconstruction of social structures around the central concept of the traditional patriarchal family and along patrilineal and patrilocal patterns is accompanied by a growing differentiation of women's life situations and by individualization, and with this by the dramatic isolation of women who cannot rely on family support.

Hence, economic and social change also weakens what had been the key resource of Anfal women throughout the 1990s: their collective structure, dense informal networks

and mutual support. At that time they lived in relatively similar conditions and were the group of *bewa-jin-î Enfal* – women without men. Now that many women have withdrawn to narrow family contexts, their collective structure has begun to erode. This process is reinforced by social envy and competition resulting from the injustice and disparities of government aid and by some male second-generation Anfal survivors' attempts to assume patriarchal power within the family and reconfirm traditional values and gender roles, restricting yet again the mobility and activities of Anfal women.



## **15 Trauma and coping in a transforming context**

In the following I will show how heavily the social and economic changes outlined above impacted on Anfal women's psychological state. With the end of the daily struggle for survival and the reconstruction of family and social contexts, they have finally begun to relax and relate to the present. The women continue to be haunted by traumatic images, but gradually reintegrate into the transforming social realities. Their individual capacity to cope with their traumatic experiences is shaped by their varying economic and social life contexts. The chapter also shows the transformation of their memories and narratives of Anfal.

### **15.1 The persistence of traumatic images**

Memories and images of Anfal are engrained in the women's minds and govern their lives to this day. Suhaila, who claims she has today relaxed and enjoys her everyday routine, will quite suddenly in the midst of her daily chores re-enact the dramatic separation from her husband. With wild gestures she goes into great detail and speaks of the nylon thread she wove into her husband's clothes, at the back of her mind the notion that this would one day help her to identify his corpse. She acts out the scene in which her husband reached out to her, and she pressed her daughter close and fled (Suhaila, 2011, see also Chapter 12). In these moments she is immersed in the scene as if it were happening in this very moment; a moment later she relaxes and picks up previous activities or conversations.

Salima, too strongly re-enacts her baby's death in the interview situation. And Naila (2012) and Hataw (2012) are haunted by the images of their baby children dying in their arms.

But when one of your children dies in your arms ... this remains in your heart.

Habsa (2011) says that, every time she sees TV images of mass graves, she is overwhelmed by pain:

My heart is heavy. When I see pictures of mass graves on television and at anniversaries, I get confused and angry for days.

She uses the term *tjekacim* for this state of confusion, which literally means »I fall apart«.

And Rabea (2012):

Each anniversary, Anfal comes back to me. I do not attend any ceremony. It makes me too sad. When I see all the images in TV, my heart aches. How could it not ache?

Amira (2010) is plagued by insomnia:

The memories come at night when I lie down, when the children are asleep, when there's no noise in the house or on the street. Every night I think about my husband, I think about what happened to him. I think, where is he? I think about everything that happened to us, all those dark years, and sleep does not come to me. But it would be strange not to think about what happened to us. How could we stop thinking about it? It wouldn't be normal...

Faima (2011), too, suffers from insomnia and is haunted by intrusive images at night:

I can't sleep at night. My heart races. I think about what they did to them. I imagine the backhoes covering their dead bodies, digging out the sand ... If your husband had disappeared and you didn't know where he was, wouldn't you think about it all the time?

She also describes attacks of restlessness overwhelming her in the midst of her daily life:

My heart is always heavy. I often look at this house, at the children, and then I am suddenly overwhelmed by a feeling of having to go outside, away from here, that I have to go walking down there in the desert with just a bundle of clothes (Faima, 2011).

And Naila (2012) describes her persistent pain like this:

You know, when you peel tomatoes and rub them with salt for cooking them; and then you have an open wound in your hand; the pain you feel then, this terrible pain, this is the pain I feel in my heart ever since. Or when you have a splinter in your finger: the pain remains the same as long as the splinter is there. It does not become less.

Faima and Amira both stress that they consider insomnia and nightmares and intense pain a normal reaction to what they went through. None of the women I interviewed talked about their suffering in psychological terms or regarded their enduring grief as a psychological disturbance. Nor do they use the word *satma* (Arabic for shock, a term frequently applied in Kurdish and closest in meaning to the word *trauma*). None of them thought she was in need of or asked for professional psychological help. Rabea (2012) says:

We do not need therapy. We rather need a social centre. We are all sisters. Those who belong to Anfal are one community. They should be all together.

In a public meeting in Berlin in October 2012, Hataw angrily spoke against a participant who stated that Anfal women suffered from PTSD and urgently needed psychological and psychiatric assistance:

What does he think? We are not ill, and we are not crazy. We don't need doctors. What we talk about has actually happened to us. We have suffered. And now we need support, but we are not crazy (Workshop protocol, 4 October 2012).

They do, however, use terms like »crazy« (*shêt*) or »psychological illness« (*naxoshî nefsi*) with reference to other women. Kafia's self-neglect and her roaming the streets are

frequently described as *crazy*. In a meeting where many Anfal women fiercely brought forward claims against the government pension programme, one woman turned to me and said, «You see! This is their »psychological illness«. They're so angry.« Suhaila thinks it is part of a »psychological illness« that Anfal women complain incessantly although their situation has meanwhile changed radically.

Viewing psychological problems as something reserved for others is an attitude that reflects a more general tendency in Kurdish public and societal debate. The debate on the impact of Anfal focuses on categories such as economic consequences and health issues. Little attention has been given to the psychological impact of violence and war on individual and social structures. More generally, Kurdish society perceives psychological problems as tantamount to psychiatric disturbances or insanity, and visiting a psychologist or psychiatrist is socially stigmatized.

While Anfal women do not think that they suffer from psychological problems, they clearly relate their health problems and physical handicaps directly to the Anfal experience. Payman and Rabea use to point to the visible scars from their injuries as an imprint of their entire experience of suffering on their bodies: »Look at me,« they use to say, »this is what they have done to us.« The most common health complaint among Anfal women is undoubtedly *faqarat* or back pain. Despite surgical intervention, Suhaila and Faima suffer from constant back pain and attribute it to Anfal and their own strenuous efforts in its aftermath. Though not consciously referring to the notion of somatization, many women clearly describe their ailments as bodily imprints of their suffering: when Habsa talks about her abdomen pain, she says that all her grief has been collected in these points of her body. Salima (2010) defines her diffuse physical pain as »a sorrow tumour«. Payman's neighbour Bafraw, who lost her son and her husband to Anfal, was operated on both eyes and says: »My eyes got bad because I cried so much for my son.« Kafia says, »My eyes have gone bad because of how much I cried.«

The Anfal women and men who died in the aftermath are said to have died »of grief« (*le xefet mirdin*).

To describe the shadow hanging over their lives, many women use images such as *dilim qurse* - my heart is heavy (Habsa, 2011; Faima, 2011) or *jianim rasha* - my life is black (Faima, 2011; Nasrin, 2011). Faima and Nasrin point to their black headscarves to indicate their sadness. Other women claim *hic shit qimetiî neme* - nothing has any value anymore (Khadija, 2010) - or *hic shit tamî niye* - nothing has any taste any more (Naila, 2012).

Summarizing, all the women I met claim to be haunted by overwhelming images and memories of Anfal and their missing relatives and thus from what can be defined as traumatic flashbacks to these days. They are also plagued by insomnia, nightmares, depressive moods, anxiety and restlessness. All of them would clearly qualify for a diagnosis of trauma.

Yet while some remain immersed in traumatic memories, others have begun to find a balance between the past and the present, to relate to the transforming environment and to reintegrate into life in the present. In the 1990s, most Anfal women in Rizgary shared similar social and economic circumstances. They saw themselves as a collective of marginalized *bewa-jin-î Enfal* who relied on each other for support. Now that their emergency status has ended and the social, economic and political context has been »normalized«, differences in their individual resources, family support and economic opportunities have begun to emerge, strongly affecting their varying capacities and strategies to cope with a traumatic past and transforming their collectively shared Anfal narrative in the process.

## 15.2 Coping

### *Immersed in a traumatic past – the »takani« women – Kafia, Akhtar, Najiba*

As outlined in Chapter 14, the situation of women like Kafia, Akhtar and Najiba, the *takani* who have no family ties to rely on, is desperate. With no hope that their missing relatives will return and forced to witness how other women around them reconstruct their family and social contexts, they have become more and more isolated. Their Anfal narrations remain unstructured and repetitive and indicate their persisting confusion and disorientation. They remain absorbed by traumatic images.

Kafia is in a sheerly bewildered state. Though she has the financial means to significantly improve her life conditions, she stubbornly stays out in a provisional shabby dwelling that she shares with goats and chicken. She refers to the latter as »her family« and says she would die without the company of the animals (Kafia, 2010). Restlessly she wanders around through Rizgary, continuously complaining and lamenting. Invited to the houses of other Anfal women, she soon becomes anxious and leaves. As soon as Anfal is mentioned in her presence, she escapes into loud lament songs. She shouts out the names of her dead brothers and re-enacts how she herself hid barefoot in a hot bread oven. She touches her feet as if to feel the burning. She is immersed in her suffering and unable to relate to others and the changing environment.

Najiba is also in a state of confusion. She is a tiny, physically weak woman, talking in a low voice and with her head bowed. She keeps listing the names of beloved people she lost and confuses the losses she suffered at various times. She says, »God did not give me the mercy of death,« (work protocol memorial project, 2010) and repeatedly says she would be better off dead.

Akhtar, too, seems frozen in the moment of narration that describes her pregnant daughter's deportation with her five children lined up behind her.

These women seek out the company of others and particularly Anfal women. They frequently attend memorial project meetings, for example, but do not take part in dialogue or discussion. They seem frozen in Anfal images and memories, incapable of relating to the here and now or engaging in social relations. They urgently require both psychological assistance and help in structuring their daily lives and developing new perspectives.

### *Mobilizing strengths and resources - Habsa and Suhaila*

In contrast, Suhaila and Habsa are now embedded in a newly reconstructed, vibrant family context. They are proud of having raised their children, have the latter's respect and support and consciously enjoy their new family lives, daily routine and social practices.

Habsa is always busy, attends meetings, travels through the region and when at home hosts a house full of guests. She enjoys being with people, and people come to her for advice. She radiates an inexhaustible energy, albeit at times this becomes restlessness.

Suhaila is a much quieter woman, more pensive. The atmosphere in her house is peaceful and contemplative and Suhaila herself emanates a kind of majestic tranquillity. She is also a point of reference and source of energy for many other Anfal women in Rizgary.

Suhaila and Habsa both claim they feel quiet today. But both describe moments and phases when they are overwhelmed by haunting images, pain and anxiety. Habsa says she gets confused and angry when she sees pictures of mass graves. Suhaila repeatedly re-enacts the scene of separation from her husband in the midst of her daily routine.

Both women undertook pilgrimages to Mecca after 2003; in addition, Habsa recently completed the »smaller« pil-

grimage to Medina. Both women have since exchanged their black headscarves for white ones; both enjoy the respect other people show them by referring to them as *haji*<sup>205</sup>; both talk with pride about the pilgrimage, the fulfilment of a long-cherished wish. Habsa notes that her belief has always »helped her through the darkest times«. While in Habsa's case the pilgrimage did not lead to changes in her daily practices, Suhaila has stopped shaking hands with men and began wearing a long coat in public over her Kurdish dress. She maintains, »Ever since I've been to God's house, I've felt clean. I do not desire to deviate from His rules anymore« (Suhaila, 2012). I was initially puzzled by her intensifying religiosity, as it seemed to contradict Suhaila's pioneering role as advocate of women's independence and empowerment. Over time, however, I came to understand that this adherence to religious practices somehow underpins her contemplative attitude towards her life course and helps her to embed the Anfal experiences in a broader perspective. Indeed, she has recently turned to criticizing other Anfal women for wailing:

What is this? Twenty-four years have gone by since Anfal. They're dead and we have to die, too. Everybody returns to the soil, all of us will turn to dust. Our own death is not far off, why should we go on complaining? (Suhaila 2012).

Not only do Habsa's and Suhaila's daily conversations focus on their present family lives and political news; also in their narrations about Anfal, the focus has shifted from the Anfal experience and their missing relatives to their own lives and experiences during and after Anfal. They now allude to their own strengths and highlight their pride at having survived adversity, »worked like men« and raised their children entirely on their own.

**205** The title used for women and men who have gone on a pilgrimage to Mecca.

When Suhaila first came to Germany in 2008 to talk at a conference on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of Anfal,<sup>206</sup> her speech focused exclusively on the Anfal events. She thanked the German public for giving her the opportunity to »let the world know about Anfal women's suffering«. Her testimony was so shocking that when she finished speaking the audience remained silent for several minutes. Only one year later, Suhaila came back to Germany, this time with Habsa, to take part in a workshop with German academics and activists. Now, the focus of both women's public statements had changed, focussing on their strength and claims rather than on their suffering. In her opening statement at the workshop Habsa declared:

We suffered terrible things during the Anfal Campaign in 1988. With the disappearance of our relatives, our lives also seemed to disappear. But we are strong women. We raised our children on our own without support. Now we want recognition (workshop protocol, 2009).

Habsa traces her strength and energy back to her childhood, her faith and her longstanding partisanship in the PUK women's union:

I have always been like a man, even when I was a child. My father told me that when I was small and guests were in the house, I used to take the meat from their plates for myself.

Two things helped me: my faith and that I was with other people I could help (...) (Habsa, 2010).

**206** Conference: »Violence, Memory and Dealing with the Past in Iraq. Twenty Years after the Anfal Operations in Kurdistan-Iraq - the survivors' perspective« in Berlin, 17 April 2008. The conference was initiated by HAU-KARI e.V. in cooperation with the Heinrich Böll Foundation and the Zentrum Moderner Orient, Berlin (see [www.haukari.de](http://www.haukari.de)); <http://en.qantara.de/Victims-without-a-Lobby/6665c6734i1p453/> (last accessed 1 April 2013).

Suhaila attributes her strong will and strength to the many social contacts she has and to her experience of detention in the 1980s:

Ever since my early childhood, I have loved being with people ... then I was in prison. They tortured me, they hung me up by my hands and beat me with cables. My torturers made no difference between men and women. Ever since I've stopped making a difference, too. The time in prison, the torture, it changes everything - your thoughts, your opinion ... it makes your spirit strong (for spirit she uses the Arabic word *fqr*) ... In the prison we were packed in one room with eighty women like this (she shows the little space each of them had). We managed to share one melon and two apples among eighty women - this is where I learned to be patient (Suhaila, 2010).

Both Habsa and Suhaila now refer back and reconnect to their lives before Anfal and take comfort in memories of their childhood and youth. Although I have known Suhaila for twenty years, only recently, in the course of evenings we spent together at her home, has she begun to talk in detail and at length about her youth. She says that she now dreams frequently about the 1980s:

I dream I'm in my village, I'm not yet married, I'm preparing food for guests. Before Anfal and all that happened (Suhaila, 2011).

I remember one meeting in particular that we had arranged at the office of a German human rights organization during Suhaila's trip to Germany in 2008. The first part of the meeting was dominated by Suhaila's testimony about Anfal. In a low voice with her head bowed and her shoulders hunched, she detailed the destruction of their villages, the separation from their families and the months of detention, humiliation and torture. As on other occasions, she described the atrocities in Nugra Salman, e.g. the »black dogs eating dead children's bodies«, with enormous intensity, although she had not witnessed them personally. The first round of the audience's questions concentrated on the Anfal experience. Eventually one of the participants then asked, »What was

your life like before Anfal?» Suhaila straightened up, leaned back and began to talk about her life in her home village. She spoke at length of green fields and village water places and how she helped her father in the fields; she recalled the many occasions when they had guests and her father slaughtered a sheep to celebrate. She listed dozens of vegetables they had cultivated. The sudden change in her attitude and body language and the obvious delight she took in her memories was fascinating to watch. No one interrupted her, although the time scheduled for the meeting was long over.

Suhaila also frequently remembers more painful memories from periods before Anfal, such as her detention in 1982. She frequently refers to the torture she suffered and talks about it in detail. She recalls her co-prisoners, describes them exactly and points to her tattoo:

My friend Shukriya did this tattoo for me. She didn't return from prison ... Mina had one too, and Fatima; neither of them returned (...) We shared everything. That's where I learned to cut an apple into twenty-seven slices - because we shared everything (Suhaila, 2010).

Despite the sad fate of her friends, Suhaila draws solace from the memory of these scenes of solidarity and collectivity and traces her ability to cope with the adverse conditions after Anfal to the lessons learned in the previous period of detention.

Habsa, too, enjoys talking about her life before Anfal; several interview appointments with her turned into long conversations about her life, which, as she always said afterwards, »does her really good«. On one occasion she recalled to her early childhood in the village, conjuring up images of green landscapes and glorious sunrises. She also recounted how her family was expelled from their village due to a tribal conflict with the renowned Kurdish Jaff tribe in 1963, when Habsa was nine years old. »The Jaff clan committed Anfal on us (*Jaff enfalyan kird boman*),« she says. »We fled immediately, my mother, my three sisters and my three brothers. All we had was a blanket and some tea and bread« (Habsa,

2010). Here she uses the Anfal experience as an explanatory pattern for a violent experience suffered twenty-six years prior to Anfal.

In the 1990s, references to past suffering served to underline the women's perception of their lives as an endless chain of suffering, whereas today Habsa and Suhaila refer to their past experience as a source of strength and a symbol of solidarity. This way they not only mobilize consoling memories, but also reconnect their brutally interrupted biographies by re-appropriating their identities and life courses beyond the Anfal experience. In a therapeutic setting, this would be described as engineering the »reintegration of the trauma into their biographies«. Unfortunately, the victim-centred Anfal discourse in Kurdish society described above gives Anfal women little space for such self-encouragement and reassurance.

Suhaila and Habsa are undoubtedly two of the strongest personalities among the Anfal women in Germany. When they came to Germany, they never tired of meeting people and gathering new impressions. Their level of energy and curiosity exceeded by far that of other members of their delegation – artists and government officials considerably younger in age. They showed great courage and clarity in delivering their testimonies and articulating their claims to the German audience. The many hours we spent in restaurants and parks between meetings were full of laughter and lightness. Seeing them outside their otherwise overshadowed context in Rizgary, I suddenly realized that they were women in their prime, just four or five years older than me.

Suhaila's and Habsa's strength is based in the dialectic relationship between individual resilience and beliefs, family and social support systems, previous political partisanship and current political engagement in, for example, the Anfal memorial project. Their political partisanship helped them to give meaning to their suffering. Their political and social commitment has enabled them to come into contact with other social groups in Kurdistan and allowed their voices to be heard internationally. In turn, they have received comfort

and acknowledgement. As a result, they are able to relate to the transforming context, altering their own perspective on the Anfal experience as they progress. Thus, today, they have a highly political view of Anfal and pioneer to be acknowledged as strong survivors, rather than as victims. At a meeting with German institutions in 2009, Habsa said:

We're village women, we're farmers, but we know how to work. We've always worked hard, side by side with our husbands and brothers, and - as well as work, as well as building houses and cultivating the land - raised our children. And then after Anfal - I apologize for having to say this - women proved to be stronger than men in dealing with the catastrophe. Many of the men broke down; many of them broke down completely. I saw many men whose wives had disappeared turn out to be very weak. I'm sorry to have to say that. We women managed to raise our children. But we also rose up against the Iraqi regime alongside our men in the resistance struggle (work protocols, 2009).

And Suhaila added: »For the last twenty years we have been fathers and mothers to our children. And we're proud of it.«

Today Habsa and Suhaila are two of the most prominent voices among German Anfal women and act as »delegates« of Anfal women on many occasions. Both have been awarded a number of prizes for their commitment to Anfal women.

There are other women in Rizgary like Habsa and Suhaila. They take a more general view of the Anfal women's cause and understand themselves as ambassadors. They give interviews, attend conferences and form the core of the Anfal Women Memorial Forum Project initiative in Rizgary, where they encourage other women to step out of their role as victims and engage in current life and politics.

*Hataw - torn between haunting images and survivor's pride*

Hataw is also one of the more active Anfal women in the German region, though due to her more precarious economic situation she is forced to work and has little time.

The same age as Habsa and Suhaila, suffering and hardships have left deep marks on her face and body, and at first glance, she gives an impression of exhaustion. It is only when she starts to talk that her energy and strength come to the fore. When in the company of other women, she often jokes and laughs.

The fact that she still works to earn a living is a source of both bitterness and pride. She often laments, saying she is tired and wishes nothing more than to finally have some rest and complaining that the lack of governmental assistance forces her to labour. In other moments, she speaks vividly instead about her work in the hospital, where she is among plenty of people every day and is informed about all kind of news and rumours. In her accounts, she integrates her current work into a lifelong chain of activities and work that underpins her inexhaustible energy despite all hardships:

You know, I have always worked. I married very young. I was only fifteen. I was so young! When guests came to visit my husband, they used to refer to me asking: »Where are your parents ... my husband was a *peshmerga*; I was not active politically then. But after Anfal I engaged with the PUK. We worked to recruit people for the PUK. We told them about Anfal. We were very active. (...) Never ever did I think about marriage. I had saved five children from Nugra Salman; never ever would I have left them. It was an obligation for me to raise them, to be with them; I did all kinds of work because of them. (Hataw, 2012)

She speaks with satisfaction and pride about her grandchildren. She says she often talks to them about Anfal. She wants them to be aware of their history.

I took them to our village recently. I showed them around, I said, this is the place from where your grandfather and your father were deported (Hataw, 2012).

However, she is haunted by images of her daughter and her son, both dying in her arms during Anfal:

I had six children with me on the way, three sons, two daughters and a new-born baby, a daughter. What could I do ... I had one child here, one here (she shows how she carried one child in each arm). One child died on the way. What could I do, I could not bury her. It happened near to the village of Kani Qadr. I handed the dead child over to a man; I am sure he buried her. (...) I don't even know where they buried the child. It was newborn. A newborn baby. Today I have a house and grandchildren. But when one of your children dies in your arms ... this remains in your heart. For all my life, this will be in my head.

(...) You can forget everything, but not Anfal and the voice of my son who kept saying he was hungry. I went out to the yard. The soldiers said, »What are you doing here?« I said, »Look here, my child is hungry.« They just sent me back.

(...) At night I dream of the past, how we lived in our village when we were all together. And then I awake up and they are all gone. This will never leave my head (Hataw, 2012).

After 2003, Hataw was taken to Sulaimania for »psychological care« but says she merely underwent some test and was given some medicine. In October 2012, she came to Germany with Suhaila. But unlike Habsa and Suhaila, she had great difficulties relating to an unfamiliar context. When talking publicly about her experiences, she got stuck and lost in some details. In a public meeting in Berlin, when a Kurdish participant raised the issue of and strongly advocated for psychiatric and psychological aid programmes for Anfal women, she reacted angrily, »We are not ill, and we are not crazy. We don't need doctors.« (Workshop protocol, 4 October 2012).

Instead, she points out the comforting impact that her testimony at the trial against Saddam Hussein and the latter's death had on her own well-being: »For me, to be able to talk directly to Saddam, to face up to him, that was like being born once again« (Hataw 2012). And about the moment when she received the news of Saddam Hussein's execution she says: »In that moment it was as if nobody had ever been Anfal. I was so happy« (ibid.).

Though Hataw has moved from Rizgary to Kalar and has little time due to her work, she keeps contact with the group of Anfal women in Rizgary. She moves frequently between Kalar and Rizgary to be an active member of the memorial project. She underlines the importance of being with other Anfal women.

When we see each other, we talk about what happened to us. We talk about our dead children. We talk about the children we brought through and raised. We talk about all our worries (Hataw, 2012).

#### *Anfal as a projection screen - Amira*

Unlike Suhaila, Habsa and Hataw, Amira's sphere of activity is largely confined to her family and her neighbourhood. She is not involved in the memorial project or politically active elsewhere. With the easing of economic hardship and the development of a new family context, however, she has visibly relaxed. In the 1990s, she lived in constant stress due to her hard work and her conflictive family situation, and she appeared a bitter and harsh woman who complained incessantly. Today she takes pleasure in her new house, looks after the household and her grandchildren, with whom she is very affectionate, and has time to sit and chat with guests. Her house is located in an Anfal complex where her neighbours are likewise Anfal women: »We visit each other every day,« she says. »We all have the same fate; we understand each other's problems.« She compares her own situation with that of others and is glad that her sons respect and support her: »Other women on our street are in clinch with their children over the house« (Amira, 2010).

Anfal is nonetheless a constant factor in the background. *Enfal ba shew le serman det* - It comes over us at night, she says.

The memories come at night when I lie down, when the children are asleep, when there's no noise in the house or on the street. Every night I think about my husband, I think about what happened to him. I think, where is he? I think about everything that happened to us, all those dark years, and sleep does not come to me. But it would be strange not to think about what happened to us. How could we stop thinking about it? It wouldn't be normal. (...) (Amira 2011).

She describes how the thought of her children's fatherless youth overshadows the joy and pride she takes from them in her current life.

It's true that our situation is better now, you see me joking and playing with the children. But then I look at my sons and feel so sorry they had to grow up without a father (Amira 2010).

Amira seems, however, to have found a balance between the tormenting images that still haunt her and her new social reality. On my more recent visits, she emanated a serenity I had never witnessed in her before.

In her daily conversations and the recent interview I conducted with her, she concentrates on family and neighbourhood issues and talks about pensions, her sons' jobs and her grandchildren. On one of my visits in 2012, she was excited about the miraculous rescue of thirty-three miners in Chile, trapped for sixty-nine days seven hundred metres underground following the collapse of a copper-gold mine. She had stayed up all night to follow live coverage of the rescue on satellite television. She said the images of the mine workers, trapped underground, reminded her of »the Anfals« and she had recognized herself in the faces of their wives and daughters waiting outside the mine.

Like Amira, other Anfal women tend to adopt the Anfal experience as a pattern with which to understand and relate to other contexts. When I spend time in Rizgari, I frequently watch television with the women (television is on without interruption in households throughout Kurdistan). Regardless of whether a telenovela or a news programme

is being shown, the women give a running commentary using Anfal as a reference point. The »baddies« in the film are branded »Baathists«, »mustahars« or »as dirty as Ali Hassan al-Majid«. When pictures of war or natural disasters are shown, Anfal women identify strongly with the victims.

In an interview during her trip to Germany in 2008, Suhaila underlines the comforting impact of meeting Holocaust survivors and relating to their experience:

It was an important and moving acknowledgement for us to be here with these extraordinary women (she refers to her meeting with women survivors of the Ravensbrück concentration camp). It was a look beyond our own experience, beyond our own walls to find that we do share so many things (Zentrum Moderner Orient, 2008).

### *Bitterness and melancholia - Faima*

Faima's life situation has also turned for the better since 2003: she lives in the midst of her sons, daughters-in-law and grandchildren in a well-equipped house. But whenever I meet her, she makes a sad, almost melancholic impression. She wears black at all times, covers half of her face with a black scarf and speaks in a low voice. She had surgery on a vertebral disk and suffers from constant back pain.

When interviewed in 2002, Faima gave a meticulous account of the various stages of her odyssey during Anfal and frequently got lost in peripheral details about food or family members, images that then served to protect her from the horror she must have felt. Today she still speaks of her detention in Nugra Salman with fierce intensity, although she is now in a position to summarize and validate her experience and to include the different stages that followed Anfal. Starting from Nugra Salman, she explains:

It was hell (*jehennim*). We went through hell. I was there with six children. Three of my nephews died in Nugra Salman. We had

nothing to eat, a bit of bread and a tomato. Nobody cared about us, nobody helped us. I saw three of my nephews die. When we cried, they grabbed us by the hair and bound us to the window frame (...) My father died immediately after our release, my mother a little later. My husband and my brothers are all Anfal. (...) When we came back I was alone with six children. I worked for the people over there in Kulajo, I picked tomatoes and eggplants. Then we fled again in 1991, with six children in my arms and at my side. That was terrible. On 31 August (she refers to the renewed attack on Erbil by the Iraqi army as part of the internal struggle between the two major Kurdish parties in 1996). I stayed here in Sumud. People said, »You should flee, your husband was a PUK member, the KDP will look for you.« I laughed. I said, »The KDP - they're humans like us.« But then I went to the village to hide. In 1998, my son died there (she stops talking and fails to hear my next question). (...) My life was one big struggle, I am very, very tired (*zor zor hilakim*) ... (Faima, 2011).

In contrast to 2002, Faima is now able to approach her Anfal experiences from a more distanced perspective and to see her experiences on a historical timeline. Nonetheless, her traumatic memories still dominate her life. She cannot sleep at night; her thoughts focus on the fate of her husband and her brothers:

My heart races, I think about what they did to them. I imagine the backhoes covering their bodies, digging out the sand ... (Faima, 2011).

When I asked her if she had any sense of relief now that she had a house of her own and grownup children and grandchildren, she traced a path from Nugra Salman to her current life:

When they (she points to her daughters-in-law) spread out the tablecloth here (she points to the tiled floor of her living room) in the evenings and bring the food, I think about all the roads we took up to this point. Once I was in hell in Nugra Salman, now I'm here in this house with my children. I think about Nugra Sal-

man, how we were all herded together, and then I think, »Now I'm here and eat ...«

*Qu: Do you think you have no right to be sitting here eating?*

No, it's not that. It's just that I keep thinking about how it was then and how it is today.

*Qu: Is it a feeling of content?*

Of course I'm glad we have a house, that my sons are good to me, that they have children. But my heart is black (she raises her black scarf for illustration) – black like this. The doctor said, »Your heart is heavy and full of fear.« Yes, my heart is heavy. My heart is always heavy. I often look at this house, at the children, and then I'm suddenly overwhelmed by a feeling of having to go outside, away from here, that I have to go walking down there in the desert with just a bundle of clothes. That's what I feel then (Faima, 2011).

Anfal images and her restlessness overshadow Faima's everyday routine. Her anxiety is paired with bitterness about the Iraqi and Kurdistan governments' disrespect and negligence and translates into a constant lament. Whenever I meet her, she complains about the lack of medical assistance, about her sons not having good jobs and about the injustice of the government pension scheme and housing programme.

We went through hell and the government is only in place today because we went through hell. Our life was difficult even before Anfal, at the time of the *peshmerga*. We didn't have anything then. We didn't know about cars, we never saw a hotel from the inside. Now, the least would be for someone to come to our door on the feast of Newroz, during Ramazan or Qurban, to visit the relatives of the martyrs and the Anfals, bring sweets to the children. That would be the least ... (Faima, 2011).

She is particularly angry about the alleged privileges former regime collaborators enjoy today:

The *mustahars* make money today. Have we gone through all this suffering to see those who did this to us treated better than us? (...) Why does an Anfal son (*kur-î Enfal*) only have a job like

that (she refers to her son's job as a guard at a construction site) and the sons of the *mustahars* have good jobs, drive big cars and everything? (Faima, 2011).

Faima seems enveloped in a state of melancholia, fatigue and bitterness that prevents her from witnessing the positive changes around her and engaging in a new outlook. Other Anfal women at times react impatiently to Faima's attitude. Suhaila said once after a meeting with Faima:

It's not true that she has nothing. They have a good house. She has four grownup sons and has given her daughter away in marriage. What does she want? I would also like to have my husband with me. I would at least have liked to have buried him myself. But it happened to us. Anfal happened. They're not coming back to us. Why should we go on lamenting? We all have to go with the tide. (...) But the women can't stop lamenting. This is the psychological illness Anfal brought on them (work protocols, 2011)

Indeed, Faima's complaints have all the hallmarks of a wall to hide behind. When cajoled and encouraged by other women, she takes a step forward, attends Anfal memorial project meetings and even joins trips to other regions; yet her engagement remains sporadic. She seems to lack the drive to go forward. As she herself explains, the shadows of the past frustrate any attempt to engage in new activities.

### *Disappointment and rage - Payman and Khadija*

Payman is also angry and bitter about what she perceives as a lack of respect and assistance from the government. Unlike Faima, she articulates her sentiments clearly and loudly. When interviewed in 2002, she expressed her anger about not being heard:

Nothing has been done for us since. Wherever we go, wherever we turn to, nobody can do anything for us. Our suffering will never end (Payman, 2002).

Today her ire has increased. When I asked her during one of my visits if I could interview her again, she vigorously refused (but agreed that I could take notes).

I swore I would never give another interview. It's twenty-three years since Anfal. Nobody has any respect for us. Those who had their hands in Anfal are now more respected than we are. We're always the last to be served in a government office (...) (Payman, 2010).

Her anger at the government blends with her anger at her neighbours and her missing husband's relatives, all of whom interfere with her life:

Yes, I've given lots of interviews. But people here don't understand. They keep making fun of me, no one here understands anything. They said, »Hey, Payman, we saw you on television.« Distant relatives of my husband phoned from Chamchamal me and said, »Why do you talk on television, that's *ayb* for all of us« (Payman, 2010).

Her uncle, who is sitting with us, intervenes:

Look, she lost four children in Nugra Salman – and who wants to know about her today? ... An interview must have an objective. There must be a concrete result for her and her children (Payman, 2010).

But Payman contradicts him:

No, it's not that I want to get loads of money for an interview. It's just that I have given a lot of interviews and nothing has been done for us (*hic boman nakrawa*).

My name was also on the list of testimonies for the tribunal against Saddam but I didn't go. (...) I did all kinds of work, but look, I'm handicapped (she points to the scars on her face and shoulder). Now, why should I give interviews? In twenty-three years, not one of those in charge (*masulakan*) has ever come to Sumud. (She beats her hand on the tiled floor.) Why should I give interviews? It has nothing to do with you.

But only minutes after arguing so vehemently about the value of giving interviews, she began to talk about her Anfal experience at length, her injury, her odyssey through various detention stations and her return to Sumud only to find her husband missing and four of her five children dead. Her narration is similar to the previous interview in 2002, but more condensed. She never returned to her home village after Anfal.

There are some houses, some families I know. But I haven't even visited. I can't. I've no energy (*taqatim niye*), not for interviews, not to return to my village, not to come to memorial project meetings (Payman, 2010).

I asked her if her situation had improved with the housing programme and the pension scheme. She replied:

They gave me a house in Kalar. What am I supposed to do in Kalar. Without a husband? Without sons? Okay, something has been done for us, yes. The pension is o.k., this is a good house. But look, my daughter finished school after the third class. I didn't want her to leave school. But at the time all her friends were going back to their village and she didn't want to go to school any more. Now she's at home (Payman, 2010).

Payman's anger is fuelled by several sources: she is angry about government negligence, her neighbourhood and her husband's relatives, her daughter's lack of prospects and ultimately her own fate, all of which points to her desperate desire to have her needs addressed and above all to feel respected.

Disappointment over government and party negligence and the desire for respect is a recurring motif in many Anfal women's narrations and conversations. The day I met Payman, other Anfal women gradually joined us. They added their anger to the discussion. At the time, the local media had announced the discovery of a mass grave in Hamrin (a city in Salahaddin province north of Baghdad). »Kurdish clothes and other personal items of the Kurds are strewn all over the site,« one woman said. »They are all Anfals. They

(the government) should have brought them here long ago. But they don't care, what do they care?« And a young woman commented angrily on the ceremony held in April of that year, the anniversary of Anfal:

What was that? It was nothing. They crowded us into tents full of dust to listen to their speeches. It would be so easy for the government to organize a nice location, to eliminate the dust, to clean everything, to make everything a bit green. We want a dignified and beautiful ceremony, not dust and dirt (in: Payman, 2010).

When I met Khadija, who lost her husband and three brothers during Anfal and was herself detained in Nugra Salman, she was already shouting when she entered the room:

What do you want from me? I only came to see you because Djamil (she points to her neighbour, who had brought me there) told me to talk to you, and he's a good man. I'm doing him a favour. What do you want now? Hurry up and ask your questions. I have to go home. I have to prepare the meal (Khadija, 2010).

She relaxed a little when my project colleagues and I explained the reason for our visit, i.e. our research and the memorial project. Still angry, she continued to speak rapidly in a loud voice:

We went through all that. You see, we were supposed to die in Nugra Salman. It wasn't planned that we return. They took us there to die. But then they changed their minds. We went through all that, one piece of bread and one glass of water a day. They bound women to the window crosses by their hair. Our brothers were buried in the sand with backhoes. And today? When we go to a governmental office today, they treat us like dirt. Every son and relative of the *mustahars* and the *jash* pass us in the queue and are served before us. And at the Anfal anniversary, the Arabs sat in the first row and we sat behind them. Why should I sit behind an Arab?

I demur cautiously: But isn't the participation of guests – of Arab guests – from Central Iraq at the Anfal commemoration a sign of respect and apology to you?

Yes, yes, but why should they be sitting in the first row? We are the ones who should be sitting in the first row and not behind the Arabs. (...) We were in Nugra Salman as political prisoners. But we don't get pensions like political prisoners (Khadija, 2010).

I asked her whether the arrest and punishment of Saddam Hussein had brought her any relief and whether her new house granted by the government had alleviated her situation:

Of course I remember the day Saddam fell and also the day he was arrested and the day he was hanged ... Of course I was glad, but it doesn't bring my brothers back. And yes, we have a good house now, better than before, but none of this has any taste or any value (*hic shit qimetii niye*). After what happened to us, nothing has any taste any more (*hic shit tami niye*) (Khadija, 2010).

Khadija's account of Anfal is brief and concise. In a telegraphic style she summarizes a number of emblematic images of Anfal that are narrated by many other women in identical words: the »hell« of Nugra Salman; the women bound to the window crosses; the brothers buried in the sand by backhoes. Her Anfal account serves to illustrate her feeling that today's injustice and the negligence of the political elite are inconceivable, rather than to underline the Anfal experience itself.

Payman's, Khadija's and many other Anfal women's sense of anger and disappointment is intense. It dominates their thoughts and conversations, and it prevents them from mobilizing their own positive resources and re-engaging in transforming social realities in Rizgary. It is first and foremost a reaction to the many years of negligence and disregard by the major Kurdish parties and the government, from the aftermath of Anfal to the present day. It is an indication of the government's failure to address Anfal women's fun-

damental need for respect and acknowledgement of their ordeal, preferring instead to console them with financial aid. The injustices of the pension and housing schemes merely add insult to injury and lead to social envy and rivalry among the women. I have often heard women accuse other women of »lying« to get assistance or of »never getting enough«.

Another source of anger and further bone of contention is the social control exercised by relatives and neighbours. And ultimately, their loudly articulated anger is also an attempt to externalize their tormenting feelings of anxiety and depression, to hold somebody responsible for their endless grief and suffering.

Similar to Faima's bitterness, Payman's rage also constitutes a sort of shielding wall that protects her from more unbearable feelings of pain and despair and behind which she also hides away from today's challenges of a changing reality. When at the end of the interview in 2010 I asked her to come to join the memorial project, she fiercely rejected the idea. No, she would not engage in any of these activities. However, at the next meeting she showed up and has attended numerous activities including trips to Sulaimania and Erbil ever since. With her energy, her pragmatism and her sometimes quite cynical sense of humour she is meanwhile an active member of the project.

### *Nostalgia - Rabea*

I had lost trace of Rabea for some years after 2003, since she had moved to live with her sons in Kalar. When I finally visited her for an interview in 2012, I hardly recognized her. I remembered a black-veiled woman deeply immersed in and confused by her suffering. I had always been disturbed by the intense and bewildered look from her one healthy eye that told much about the abyssal experiences she had gone through. Now I met instead an apparently relaxed, warm-hearted woman, dressed in warm green, her henna-coloured curly hair springing out of her headscarf. We sat in a spacious

living room, were served tea by her two beautiful and colourfully dressed daughters-in-law and surrounded by a horde of her grandchildren playing around us.

It seemed to me that she had grown since I had last seen her. Indeed, she says she is fine today. Her financial situation is good, and she enjoys the company of her sons, daughters-in-law and grandchildren. She would like to have another surgery for a new eye. She wants it to look more natural and nicer. She says her sons respect her and do everything to make her happy.

My sons say, »Mother, if you like to go to a nice place, if you want to visit relatives, we will take you, we have a car, we take you there.« They always try to persuade me to join them for picnics and excursions. But I do not go to picnics. My heart does not allow me (*dilim nalet*). If I go with them, it is just to make them happy. For myself, I don't feel like joining them (Rabea 2012).

But she also talks about the many moments of restlessness that overwhelm her and the dreams of her husband and her missing brothers.

Each anniversary, Anfal comes back to me. I do not attend any ceremony. It makes me too sad. When I see all the images in TV my heart aches. How could it not ache? I have no notice regarding my husband. But they showed it on TV. We know how it was. They killed them and then they shovelled earth on them with backhoes. For fifteen years I waited. But now it is twenty-three years. It is over (*xeles buwe*) (Rabea, 2012).

In 2002, Rabea had described her life as an endless chain of pain and suffering. Today she looks back with both pain and pride.

Then we could not think of anything but how to get a piece of clothing for our children, a Dinar to take them to the doctor, a piece of bread for the children. Today we have pensions and we have houses. (Rabea, 2012).

And at times there are even traces of nostalgia in her accounts of the past:

We were young, we were strong; day and night we worked for our children. God helped us ... I did not care if I was hungry. It was important to me to feed the children (...) At that time - who could stop us? I had to pull through six children. Who could then dare to ask me where I went or what I did. We did not listen to anybody then. Not to the men, not to anybody. (Rabea, 2012).

Since she has moved to Kalar, however, she strongly misses the company of other Anfal women.

I have little contact to other Anfal women. At that time, we were always together. We visited each other. We took care of each other. When we cooked, we put pots and plates outside our doors. We were all the same. We did not make differences, this is my house, this is your house, this woman over there is a stranger ... . Here in Kalar, in this quarter, the neighbours are strangers to me. We say hello, nothing else. It is not like at that time with the Anfal women. With Faima for example (Rabea and Faima lived in the same block in Rizgary the 1990s) ... we met each other even at one o'clock at night. The others helped me to get my disability pension. At that time, I would even have liked to engage in the Party; those engaged in the Party were always together ... Suhaila, Habsa and the others. But because of the children ... I could not leave my children alone (Rabea, 2012).

I have met such traces of nostalgia for the hard times of the 1990s in other Anfal women's accounts, also, showing how they themselves sense the erosion of their collective structure in the process of transformation.

### **15.3 Previously repressed memories coming to the fore**

With the change in Anfal women's perspectives on their experiences and their lives, formerly repressed memories, too, come to the fore in their narratives.

### *The memory of the collaborators*

Payman, Khadija and Faima give vent to their outrage and rancour at how well former Baath regime collaborators are treated and that they even hold positions of authority. In today's discussion among Anfal women and more generally the Anfal survivor community, the active role of the *jash* during the Anfal Campaign and their reintegration into Kurdish society is a prominent topic.

Already in the 1990s, Anfal women had narrated the »betrayal« by neighbours and relatives as a specifically dramatic and painful experience. At the time, however, this recollection remained at the individual level and was somewhat vague. There seemed to be a high sensitivity that the collaborator debate was too explosive an issue in the fragile Kurdish society, given that the Iraqi regime was still in place and the political status of the Kurdish region both precarious and provisional. After the collapse of the Baath regime in 2003 and the stabilization of the Kurdish region, the memory of the Kurdish collaborators' role during Anfal began to surface and come to the fore in both the individual and collectively shared narratives of Anfal women and, more generally, the survivor community. One of today's key demands Anfal survivors place on the Kurdistan Regional Government is to revoke the amnesty granted to collaborators by the Kurdistan Front in 1991 and to bring them to justice.

The topic is complex. Many Anfal survivors recall the *jash* militia as the first and most direct perpetrators in the Anfal Campaign. In 1996, Suhaila's neighbour told me: »I only saw Kurds, no Arabs« (1996, see Chapter 6). Her perception of the Anfal scenario reflects the shock and utter incredulity she felt at the betrayal. In the Germyan region, *jash* had guided Iraqi soldiers to *peshmerga* hideouts. They were the first to invade villages, loot and burn down houses and round up villagers for deportation. Many Anfal women recall that *jash* »accompanied« them during the deportation as far as the gates of Nugra Salman. Other women, like Habsa, in contrast, met collaborators helping them and even saving

their lives in a sudden act of mercy or regret when they realized the lethal dimensions of Anfal.

Moreover, the collaborators themselves frequently fell victim to Anfal and found their own houses destroyed and their families deported when they returned to their villages. Quite a number of former members of the *jash* militia are today registered as Anfal victims and entitled to pensions or housing grants.

These ambiguities have led to lengthy, often contradictory feelings and controversial discussions among the survivors. Most agree, however, on calls for the punishment of the *mustahars*, i.e. the commanders of the various *jash* militia; those who – in Payman’s words »had their hands in Anfal« (*destyan le naw Enfal buwe*). All are perturbed by the Kurdish political elite, who not only failed to bring the *mustahars* to justice, but also bestowed on them positions of power in Kurdish regional politics and society.

When it comes to the regular *jash* militiamen, Anfal survivors are more ambivalent, their opinions divided. Some Anfal women are in contact with former *jash* in their neighbourhood; many have parental bonds or common village origins with *jash*. Thus, now many Anfal women’s conversations turn on »which *jash* did what«, who was an »evil one« and who »changed his mind (*pêshiman buwe*) and saved villagers«. Some express compassion for the *jash*; they claim that many of them joined the militia in order to flee the Iraqi army; they also say the *jash* were frightened and under pressure during Anfal. Other survivors argue that many *jash* were already punished by suffering the same fate as Anfal victims. Hence the *jash* are depicted as both victims and perpetrators. Women like Faima, Payman and Khadija, on the other hand, are outraged whenever they see *jash* receiving their pensions or when, as Khadija says, »Every son and relative of the *mustahars* and the *jash* pass us in the queue and are served before us« (Khadija, 2010). The phrase »every son of a *jash* enjoys more respect than a son of Anfal« can be heard in almost identical wording from countless women. It is a collectively shared expression of Anfal women’s twofold

sense of betrayal: first of all by the collaborators and once again by the Kurdish parties and the government. Indeed, the issue of collaborators is now a key area in which Anfal survivor narratives contrast with the dominant narrative and in which survivors enter into open conflict with the political elite (see Chapter 16).

### *Sexual violence*

During the 1990s, the taboo issue of sexual violence in the course of Anfal was mentioned only sporadically in individual conversations and interviews. With the passing of time, Anfal women, now older, lost their fear of social stigmatization, giving rise to greater prominence of the topic of sexual violence in their narrations.

The emergence of a strong Kurdish women's rights movement in the urban centres since the late 1990s brought the issue of gender-based violence and honour killings to the public debate and paved the way for discussing such issues. In 2003, the discovery of Baath security documents confirming the deportation of Kurdish girls captured during Anfal to Egyptian nightclubs mobilized the public in Kurdistan and abroad to press for information from the Egyptian government.<sup>207</sup>

In the Anfal trial at the Iraqi High Tribunal in 2005, the chief prosecutor denounced rape and systematic sexual violence against women during Anfal as one of the Anfal crimes. However, in the preparatory stage of the trial it was not possible to find a woman ready to testify about her personal experience of rape during Anfal. Adalat Omar, a Kurdish re-

**207** See, for example, »Kurdish girls were detained by Baath, sold and then sent to their ›new owners‹ in Egypt«. Open letter from the Kurdish Women Action Against Honour Killing to the United Nations, the CPA, the UK representative in Iraq and the Iraqi Governing Council. 25 July 2003. Available at: <http://www.kwahk.org/articles.asp?id=36> (last accessed 1 April 2013).

searcher and activist, once told me she had met at least 45 women who had been raped during Anfal; none of them was ready to appear in the courtroom.<sup>208</sup> Thus, witnesses at the Anfal Trial, like Hataw (see Chapter 12), merely spoke about sexual violence against third persons. Mohammed Oreibi al-Khalifa, a Tribunal judge, said in an interview with *Newsweek* in 2008:

Some of the elderly women told us that the investigators would take some of the young women at night, saying they wanted to investigate [sic] them. In fact, there was no investigation. They were being raped. We asked the elderly women how they knew about this. They said that when the young ladies came back they told them they were raped. Another elderly woman had seen the rape occur through curtains.<sup>209</sup>

Suhaila (2011) vividly remembers Mamosta A.s testimony about the brutal rape and murder of a co-prisoner in the Dibs detention centre (see also Chapter 12) at the trial and Saddam Hussein's reaction:

Everyone could see her, her whole body without any clothes, and then they raped her (she uses the term *sinaian kird*. I asked whether they had beaten or raped her, using *ihṭisab*, the Arabic term for rape.) Yes, yes, they raped her, and then they all put banknotes on her head like this, in her hair (she demonstrates with her own hair), and then they killed her. And everyone saw it. When Mamosta A. told this story, Saddam broke into a rage. He moved his head like this (Suhaila shakes her head vigorously from left to right). He said, »No, no, she's lying! Nothing like that happened in Iraq. It's not true!« He was raging and left the courtroom and didn't appear the next day. So then when I spoke, he wasn't there.«

Saddam Hussein had already shown a similar reaction to the prosecutor's opening statement that referred to systematic

**208** Conversation with Adalat Omar, Erbil, 19 April 2011.

**209** »Saddam's unrepentant judge«, *Newsweek* 28 Jan. 2008.

sexual violence as an Anfal crime: »I can't sit down and remain silent when it's said that an Iraqi woman was raped. This couldn't happen while Saddam Hussein is alive« (*New York Times*, 22 Aug. 2006).

Due to the lack of first-hand testimonies, sexual violence was not included in the official charges against Saddam Hussein, Ali Hassan al-Majid or other co-defendants in the Anfal trial. The prosecutor's statement and indirect witness accounts, however, constituted a catalyst for the public articulation of sexual violence as part of the Anfal experience. Today, when Anfal women list or summarize atrocities, references to sexual violence, rape and the abduction of hand-picked young women and girls are an inherent component.

In the public debate in Iraqi Kurdistan, to a certain extent researchers and women's organizations have included sexual violence during Anfal and the stigmatization of victims in their more general denouncement of gender-based violence. However, although openly denounced as an Anfal atrocity, speaking about sexual violence personally remains a taboo issue in the Anfal survivors' community. In Anfal women's narrations, sexual violence remains veiled in metaphors and is never related as a first-person account. In all these years, I have not come across a woman who spoke about her personal experience of sexual violence. Adalat Omar and Choman Hardi (2011), who have both worked more specifically on the issue of sexual violence, describe similar experiences. Suhaila confided in me that even in the most intimate conversations with each other, this subject remains eclipsed and is merely alluded to indirectly by Anfal women. She also says, however, that most of the women who were raped did not survive Anfal:

When they took young women ... most of them did not come back. No woman has ever openly admitted such an experience to me. You know the women don't talk about these things, not even to me. I heard about one who was raped in Nugra Salman. Absolutely terrible.

... her little brother was with her. He was the same age then as my nephew is now (she points to her nephew playing in the yard) – he was only about eight years old. They took him and bound him to a window cross and then they took the girl and raped her. And the boy saw it. I was told he hit his head against the window like this (she shakes her head left and right) and shouted. ... I know the girl survived but I don't know what happened to her after that. I think she came from the martyr town of Halabja originally.<sup>210</sup> (...) The women don't talk about it. It's also their sons telling them not to talk about it. They feel ashamed when their mothers talk about torture or physical abuse. I have heard so many stories, terrible stories, about what happened to women in Nugra Salman. Soldiers put weapons into their bodies. Menstruation blood stuck to their bodies for months because they couldn't wash themselves. I always say you have to talk about it. If you don't, who else is going to talk about it? Then no one will ever know. But then they say to me, »You should talk about it, talk about it in our name.«

As mentioned earlier, Suhaila acts as a delegate of Anfal women on many occasions, often summarizing other women's stories and experiences as if they were her own. In the testimonies she gave in conferences in Germany, she included sexual violence in her denouncements and also addressed other embarrassing female experiences in the camps, such as having to live with menstruation blood on their clothes for months.

**210** Most people in Kurdistan now refer to Halabja as »the martyrs' Halabja«.

#### **15.4 From victims to survivors - the transformation of collective memories and narratives**

As the above descriptions illustrate, the political, social and economic changes that occurred after 2003 had a major impact on the women's perspective on Anfal and their psychological state. All of them continue to be haunted by traumatic images and memories, to suffer from abrupt and overwhelming feelings of distress and to display several psychosomatic symptoms. None of them, however, describes their suffering in psychological terms or asks for psychological help. Their individual capacity to cope with trauma and find a balance between the past and the present alters with the transforming context and strongly correlates with the level of social and family support they can rely on. While women who lack family support remain immersed in their traumatic memories, the majority of Anfal women in Rizgary now live in new family contexts, enjoy relatively secure economic conditions and have visibly relaxed. They increasingly relate to the here and now and reconstruct their daily routines and social relations. After years of uncertainty, of struggling to survive and of anxiety about their children, they can finally concentrate on themselves, take care of their health, become socially active or - like Habsa and Suhaila - fulfil the long-cherished desire to go on a pilgrimage to Mecca. They find satisfaction and at times even joy in their grandchildren and draw contentment and pride from having survived, brought up their children and reconstructed their families.

These changes have also transformed their Anfal memories and narratives. In the 1990s, their fragmented memories and the disrupted structure of their narratives reflected shock and disorientation. Their lengthy reports had little sense of chronology and often focused on peripheral details that concealed rather than exposed the horror of the atrocities they had been subjected to, indicating their unbroken immersion in their traumatic images.

Today the women talk about Anfal from a more distanced and historicized perspective. They use images that epitomize

their experience and are often shared collectively. »Our children were eaten by black dogs« is still commonly used as a metaphor for the Anfal atrocities. »The women were bound to window crosses by their hair« is a memory referred to by many to depict the Nugra Salman nightmare, while the shock of the discovery of the mass graves finds expression in phrases such as »our bothers were buried by backhoes«, »our brothers' bones were covered in dust«.

The thoughts and narrations of Anfal women in the 1990s were dominated by uncertainty about the fate of their missing relatives. Their self-image was governed by the absence of male breadwinners. Today, their narrations focus to a greater extent on their own fate during and after Anfal. They embed the traumatic experience of violence and loss in a timeline that encompasses experiences prior and subsequent to Anfal. Some women draw strength from this more historical perspective on their life course; others have a more victim-focused attitude towards their lives, which they see as an unending chain of suffering. Many show intense feelings of rage and bitterness at the negligence of political parties and government. Common to all women, however, is the emphasis they place on their own resourcefulness, which served them well in bringing up their children under nigh to impossible conditions.

They express pride and satisfaction at having survived attempts by the Baath regime to annihilate them. As a frame of reference, however, Anfal remains omnipresent for these women, a backdrop against which they relate to and interpret the here and now and the new challenges this brings.

At the same time, economic improvement and the reconstruction of social relations in accordance with traditional family patterns lead Anfal women to withdraw to narrow family contexts and thereby to the gradual erosion of the dense collective structure that was their principal resource for survival in the 1990s. This process is reinforced by the paternalizing tendencies of Anfal women's meanwhile grownup sons, who try to restrict their mothers' range of agency to the family and the home - after these women struggled for

years to raise them. Yet despite this shift towards individualization, Anfal women are still closely related to each other and draw strength from each other. They live side by side in Anfal housing complexes; they visit each other; they meet at hospitals, funerals and – now more commonly – wedding parties; they come across each other once a month at the Anfal pension offices. They see each other on Fridays at the cemetery and, when they take place, at Anfal anniversary ceremonies. They take part in joint activities: even those who are not involved in the memorial project on a regular basis attend some of the events or participate, for instance in photo exhibitions.

Anfal women are well informed about each other's situations; they refer to themselves as the group of *jine Anfalkan* (Anfal women). They take up and respond to each other's memories and arguments. As in the 1990s, they still use collective metaphors to describe their Anfal experiences and their anger and bitterness about the political elite.

Women like Suhaila, Habsa, Hataw and other women active in public meetings or the memorial project play a vital role in publicly voicing the needs and claims of Anfal women. They give new impulses to the discussion among Anfal women and encourage them to step out their passive role and engage in social and political activities.

The focus of the collectively shared Anfal narratives has therefore begun to shift from the Anfal experience and the missing to the women's own experiences during and after Anfal and their current demands. Here again, second-generation Anfal survivors are crucial in shifting the centre of attention in the collective narratives from the disappeared to the fate of their mothers. Many of them are outraged by the enduring lack of assistance and emphasize the sacrifices their mothers made to bring them up. These daughters and sons of Anfal women are outspoken and demand recognition and support for their mothers and themselves.

In the 1990s, Anfal women's hopes and demands were largely restricted to economic aid and the return of their male relatives. Today these women openly communicate their

claims to the Iraqi government and the Kurdistan Regional Government: they demand, firstly, the rapid opening of mass graves and, secondly, evidence of and the truth about the fate of their relatives. They also insist on punishment for the perpetrators, compensation and a public apology to the Kurdish people.

They furthermore demand greater economic support from the Kurdistan Regional Government, the punishment of Kurdish collaborators and – very centrally – political acknowledgement of their ordeal and the respect they are due.

Some women argue politically, underpinning their claims with reference to their support for Kurdish liberation. Others are driven by less reflective feelings of anger and frustration about the political elite's negligence towards their situation in the 1990s and ever since.

However, with the shift in Anfal women's narratives from victimhood narrations to a focus on their current realities and claims as survivors, they enter into conflict with and challenge the dominant Kurdish national victimhood discourse on Anfal.

## **16 Anfal women between victimhood and agency**

### **16.1 Between loyalty to the dead and new perspectives**

With their newly growing self-confidence and assertive articulation of demands for evidence, justice and compensation, Anfal women increasingly conflict with the dominant Anfal discourse, which, as outlined in detail in Chapter 13, depicts them as passive victims and symbols of national suffering. Not only do they break with the victim image by underlining their strength and their pride; they also scratch the surface of Kurdish unity in victimhood by emphasizing the role of the collaborators and their own marginalization by the Kurdish parties and the government throughout the 1990s.

It would, however, be misleading to assume that Anfal women explicitly criticize or reject their representation as victims or that their role as symbols of suffering was forced on them solely by the public debate. As shown above, Anfal women constantly oscillate between intrusive images of the past and the challenges of their present lives. They are torn between their strong bonds and a sense of obligation to the dead and what LaCapra (2001) calls *fidelity to trauma*, on the one hand, and the desire to develop new life perspectives, on the other; between victimhood and agency. On the one hand, they welcome social and economic change but, on the other hand, fear that the memory of Anfal victims and their own suffering could be overlaid and therefore

weakened by transforming social realities. On the one hand, they actively reconstruct their present lives, highlight their strengths and articulate their claims on the political elite. At times – like Habsa and Suhaila – they even refer to themselves as carriers of social change by pioneering for women’s autonomy. On the other hand, they want their suffering to remain visible and addressed and have a strong desire to lean back and, after years of hardship, be provided for. Thus their public representation as passive victims and symbols of national suffering interacts with their own ambivalent feelings. Although it confines them to passivity and restricts their range of agency, it provides them with a strong identification scheme and constitutes a form of societal acknowledgement of their ordeal.

This aspect becomes more evident with a closer comparative look at the situation of male Anfal survivors who lost their wives and children to Anfal. Most of the men I met or interviewed had remarried quite soon after Anfal and had seemingly integrated into new lives more easily than women.<sup>211</sup> But unlike Anfal women, who developed a strong collective structure and shared trauma-protective narratives, male Anfal survivors were far more isolated and had little occasion to share their grief with their new wives and children. While public discourse on Anfal largely followed a pattern of »male victims, female survivors« and focused primarily on Anfal women as the emblem of Kurdish suffering, little attention was given to the fate of the men who survived Anfal. They seemed to fall through all schemes of identification.

When I interviewed men, I sensed their strong desire to tell their story. Many of them started to cry or even broke down once they began to talk.

As a result of their public image as victims, Anfal women had instead a public role with which they could identify. Despite its disempowering effect, it constituted a form of social and political acknowledgement. Indeed, at public events

such as political speeches or commemoration ceremonies, Anfal women actively orchestrate their public appearance as a group of mourners dressed in black, wailing loudly and holding up photographs of their missing relatives. Many leave the task of articulating Anfal survivor demands to second-generation survivors, i.e. their sons, who in turn tend to present their mothers as needy victims.

### *The television series Germyan and Kwestan*

I will take the example of the debate around a controversial television series based on Anfal that the PUK-affiliated television station KurdSat aired in 2010 to illustrate some of these ambivalences. What was initially planned as a television series of thirty-seven episodes entitled *Germyan and Kwestan* was set in Sumud/Rizgary in 1993, five years after Anfal.<sup>212</sup> The plot is quickly told: Jawhar, a Kurd from a Germyan village, is sent with the Iraqi army to the front in the Iran-Iraq war in 1980. He is captured and spends thirteen years in Iran as a prisoner-of-war. He returns to Germyan in 1993 to find his village destroyed and his wife and two children, Germyan and Kwestan, missing. After a desperate search, he ultimately finds them alive and well. His wife, however, is meanwhile married to his older brother. While searching for his family, Jawhar encounters a number of Anfal survivors and their sad fates: Zohra, who lives with her father and is still hoping for the return of her husband, who disappeared with Anfal; Peri, who lost her husband and takes on whatever work she can get in order to raise her only son.

The series touches on many of the emblematic Anfal narratives, e.g., »children eaten by black dogs«, unmarried girls waiting for the return of their missing spouses, old men and women who are the sole survivors of their entire families.

**212** The screenplay was written by Dilshad Hussein, the producer was Salar Sultan; see [www.kurddrama.com](http://www.kurddrama.com).

It shows the hardship that Anfal survivors endured in the aftermath of Anfal and how women struggled to bring up their children. The houses shown in the film, however, are too spacious, too spotless and too furnished to convey the real poverty that existed at the time. Some episodes deal briefly with the lack of assistance to Anfal survivors in the 1990s, with the internal party conflict between KDP and PUK and with the parties' ignorance and negligence of Anfal survivors' life situations. Yet the tension of the telenovela-like episodes develops around the emotional stories of the protagonists. Zohra is torn between her loyalty to her missing husband and her budding love for her neighbour Hamid; affection is likewise beginning to grow between Jawhar and his neighbour Peri. The viewer witnesses, in sequences developing in parallel, Jawhar on his search and his brother setting up a new household with Jawhar's wife and two children, and anticipates the dramatic showdown ahead. When Jawhar discovers what has happened, he is furious at what he sees as a twofold betrayal by his wife and his brother. The latter try in turn to explain the agony of waiting and the social pressure on Jawhar's wife, alone with two children.

The plot was not to evolve entirely: soon after the programme was launched, protest came from the Anfal survivor community in Germyan. Survivor groups demonstrated in front of the KurdSat television station, demanding that the series be cancelled. They claimed the focus on »love stories« in the series trivialized the extreme suffering of Anfal survivors both during and after Anfal. They expressed their indignation at the female characters' desire for love and a new relationship, while in reality Anfal women in the 1990s had struggled to survive and stoically waited for the return of their husbands. Local media picked up and spread their claims. A number of Anfal women participated in the protests. But the majority of demonstrators were young, male, second-generation survivors – Anfal women's sons – who strongly objected to how their mothers were portrayed in the series: *Dramake sukayetî le daikekanman ekat* (the dra-

ma humiliates our mothers).<sup>213</sup> In response to the protests, KurdSat cancelled the programme with a final hastily produced thirteenth episode.<sup>214</sup>

These events generated a broad debate, in many aspects reminiscent of the heated discussions surrounding the US television series *Holocaust* in 1978. The portrayal of the Holocaust via a family saga led to protests by survivors, who claimed it falsified, trivialized and commercialized the Holocaust (see, for example, Elie Wiesel 1978).<sup>215</sup>

In Kurdistan, the topic was lengthily discussed in the media; the PUK TV station aired live TV discussions. The creators of *Garmyan and Kwestan* countered the critics by stating their original intentions. They had wanted to bring the situation of Anfal survivors closer to the people by showing them in their daily lives and creating emotional bonds through the universal theme of love.<sup>216</sup> Support came from several intellectuals and artists, who saw the survivor protests as an attack on artistic freedom. Islamist groups and members of the opposition movement Goran took the opposite stance. Given that it was aired on a PUK-affiliated television station, Goran identified the series as further proof of government negligence towards Anfal survivors and instead emphasized their own respect for the suffering of Anfal survivors and the latter's significance for the Kurdish nation. Second-generation male survivors defined the series as a

**213** Huseyn, the producer was Salar Sultan; see [www.kurddrama.com](http://www.kurddrama.com).

**214** »Alqai ZnzHIRA Dramai (Garmyan (sic!) u Kwestan) y parand«. (KurdSat) cancels 17 episodes of the drama *Garmyan and Kwestan*, *Awena*, 27 April 2010; Ako Muhamad, »Objections stop a TV drama on Anfal«. *The Kurdish Globe*, 1 May 2012.

**215** Elie Wiesel, »Trivializing the Holocaust: Semi-Fact and Semi-Fiction«. *The New York Times*, 16 April 1978.

**216** In Ako Muhamad, »Objections stop a TV drama on Anfal«. *The Kurdish Globe*, 1 May 2012, the writer of the screenplay Dikshad Huseyni is quoted: »Love is the biggest human value. People of Anfal are human and own that value. Love is a beautiful part of being human. People of Anfal also have beauty; thus, we shouldn't interpret love by insulting humankind.«

dismissal of their suffering and moreover an assault on their honour. They rejected the idea that their mothers had even thought of love or remarriage and stressed their mothers' purity in waiting for their missing husbands. Some said they had felt ashamed while watching the series. One young man admitted he was glad his mother was now dead; otherwise he would not have been able to look her in the eye after seeing the film. Thus, the debate was marked by a conglomeration of political criticism of the government, reaffirmation of traditional and patriarchal gender patterns and honour values, and a quasi-sacralization of Anfal women, once again cementing their role as national symbols of suffering.

Anfal women were themselves largely absent in the evolving debate; none of them participated, for example, in the aforementioned television discussion. Their opinions on the issue differed: Suhaila was angry about the protests and especially about Anfal women's sons, who had presumed to judge their mothers' morals: »How can this man dare to say he feels ashamed of his mother, after she gave her life to bring him up?« She was upset that she had not been invited to the discussion on the series. »Why didn't KurdSat invite me? I would have given a different insight into our situation. Of course we were full of grief then, our life was one big struggle. But yes, there were also women who had desires, many of us were young, some remarried. Why should we not talk about it?«<sup>217</sup> Habsa was more ambivalent. Engaged in the opposition movement, she shared the criticism and saw the telenovela as a proof of the lack of sensitivity towards Anfal survivors on the part of the major political parties. When the protests intensified, however, she took a step back: »Who married, who divorced, who did this, who did that ... I don't care.«<sup>218</sup>

Other women like Faima and Rabea had not even watched the series. Others, like Amira or Payman, spoke about it prag-

**217** Suhaila in a personal talk in July 2010.

**218** Habsa in a conversation in 2010.

matically, mentioning women who had remarried but confirming that the majority of them had not. Many said they had other things to think about than a television series and some distanced themselves clearly from the protestors with the comment like »it was people from Chamchamal and political people, Islamists and the like who led the protests« (Faima, 2011).

The debate on the cancelled television series is yet another example of the lack of knowledge about and empathy with the plight of the Anfal survivors in the dominant public Anfal discourse. It is also yet another example of the exclusion of Anfal women's opinions and testimonies, of a debate about instead of with them. It demonstrates how their situation is politically exploited to serve various interests. It furthermore illustrates the role of second-generation male survivors described earlier, who attempt to establish their own interpretation of Anfal, use the victim discourse to reaffirm traditional values and write in stone their mothers' role as passive, quasi-sacral symbols of suffering.

## **16.2 The significance of commemoration ceremonies and memorials**

Commemoration ceremonies and memorials are another terrain on which conflict flares up, as they involve decisions on how Anfal should be portrayed.

Much has been written on the importance of memorials and mourning rituals for the survivors of mass violence. For the relatives of missing persons like the Anfal survivors, who lack graves to mourn their dead, they are particularly vital as a form of symbolic closure (Hamber & Wilson, 2002; Preitler, 2006). At the same time, memorials are sites where contrasting memories and interpretations of the past assume a bodily shape and become most visible. In addition, commemoration ceremonies are the rare occasions when Anfal survivors meet politicians and receive media attention.

In the initial years after 2003, I remember Anfal survivors strongly protesting against Kurdistan Regional Government

plans to bury Anfal victims in central graveyards and erect monuments in central places like the capital Erbil. Instead they affirmed their strong desire to bury their relatives near their homes and to have places of remembrance where they could mourn their loved ones in their immediate neighbourhood. I also remember their bitterness about senior politicians who attended ceremonies in Erbil or Sulaimania, far removed from the Anfal regions, but were absent at local commemoration ceremonies.

At the anniversary ceremony on 16 March 2006 commemorating the gas attack on Halabja, the resentment felt by the survivors turned into open conflict for the first time: high-ranking members of the Kurdistan Regional Government and political parties attended the ceremony with international guests, among them the Mayor of Hiroshima. Some two thousand demonstrators from Halabja blocked their way into the city, demanding more assistance and the reconstruction of the town instead of »decorative ceremonies once a year«. The protest turned into open clashes, during which security forces killed a seventeen-year-old boy. Demonstrators finally set fire to the monument and the museum of Halabja. To what they considered a blasphemous attack on a major symbol of the Kurdish national tragedy, the security forces responded with numerous arrests and accused the demonstrators of terrorism.<sup>219</sup> The subsequent media debate was, however, governed by an appreciation of the sentiments of Anfal and Halabja survivors and marked the beginning of a wider public perception of their social reality. In light of this comprehensive media response, the government withdrew legal proceedings against the demonstrators and has since made efforts to show more presence among the Anfal and Halabja survivors.

Approximately one thousand five hundred bodies of Anfal victims have hitherto been exhumed and reburied close to

**219** See, for example, Hardi, Ardalan: Commentary on Halabja 2006, Kurdish aspect, <http://www.kurdishaspect.com/commentaryonhalabja.html>; .

their homes. Plans have been made to erect memorials in the vicinity of the graveyards. In addition to the monumental central memorial for Anfal victims and martyrs recently completed in Erbil, the Ministry of Martyrs and Anfal Affairs has announced plans to build eight memorial sites of similar proportions in the eight different regions affected by the Anfal Campaign. The concept and design of these structures is driven by the desire to let the world know the dimensions of the Kurdish tragedy, rather than to meet the need of Anfal survivors for a place to mourn their dead.

In Rizgary, commemoration ceremonies and memorials had meant little to Anfal women all through the 1990s up to the regime change. After 2003, when hope for the return of their relatives vanished and the economic emergency ended, their wish emerged to publicly express their grief and give it some kind of form. Anfal survivors began to design their own local commemoration rituals. On 14 April of each year since 2006, 182 young men and women from survivor families, each representing a thousand Anfal victims, wrap themselves in white bed sheets and, bearing torches, go from house to house. The bed sheets carry the words »Where is my father? Where is my husband? What has been done to the Anfals?« in English and Kurdish. These local rituals are a direct expression of grief in the Anfal survivor community.

At the same time, Anfal women's demand for »official« ceremonies and government memorial sites are linked to their demand for respect, acknowledgement and public representation. Indeed, Anfal women meticulously observe, comment on and respond to how the government organizes commemoration ceremonies and how politicians refer to them in their speeches, and they complain bitterly when they feel left out, exploited or disrespected. At every annual remembrance day, they express their dissatisfaction at the absence of high-ranking politicians at their local ceremonies.

The burial of 187 victims of Anfal in Sumud/Rizgary in April 2009 - although embedded in a solemn three-day ceremony of epic proportions organized by the Kurdish government - was transformed into a protest against the absence

of leading Kurdish politicians at the ceremony and taken as an occasion to submit 50,000 signatures to a member of the Kurdistan parliament in attendance, demanding the prosecution of Kurdish collaborators. The day before the ceremony, Anfal survivors had already made use of the media presence to demonstrate in favour of punishing the collaborators. During the ceremony, survivors, overwhelmed by pain, interrupted the speeches of the attending governmental officials and stormed to the coffins, loudly lamenting and crying. Later they would criticize the ceremony's lack of dignity and »chaotic organization in the midst of dust and dirt«.

The survivors' discontent with government Anfal ceremonies has almost become a ritual itself. Khadija's complaints about Arab guests sitting in the front row or other women's impatience with the slow process of transferring exhumed bodies show their tremendous expectations of recognition and consolation, which cannot be addressed by a ceremony alone. The survivors' unabated condemnation of official memorial procedures is, on the one hand, an expression of profound frustration with and mistrust of the political elite after decades of marginalization and instrumentalization. At the same time, it is an attempt to externalize the overwhelming pain resurrected at each passing commemoration day. Political opposition groups, too, exploit this discontent and use commemoration days to criticize the government's performance towards Anfal survivors. Thus, commemoration ceremonies remain an arena of conflicting narratives and concepts of Anfal memorialization.

### 16.3 The Anfal Women Memorial Forum Project, Rizgary<sup>220</sup>

In 2008, the artist Bayan Mani – commissioned by the Kurdistan Regional Government – designed and constructed an Anfal memorial for Rizgary in the form of an oversized traditional shepherd's coat, the so called *faranji*.

The monument was erected without previous consultation with Anfal survivors or their local committees and led to considerable indignation among Anfal women. Some rejected outright what they saw as their representation as »backward shepherds« and argued, »We weren't shepherds, we helped the *peshmerga*. We don't want to be shown as shepherds; we want to be shown as strong women.« Others claimed that the shepherd's garb was a folkloristic symbol of the rural regions, but had no specific relation to Anfal and was therefore meaningless. Other critics referred to the monument's lack of sophistication, the poor quality of the gypsum used to construct it and its cheapness. Many times I heard the statement: »They spent about five hundred dollars on remembrance of the Anfal catastrophe« to sum up the disrespect they associated with the monument.

It was this monument that triggered a discussion among Anfal women about an alternative memorial, one that would be a genuine portrayal of what they had experienced. In the same year, 2008, a delegation of Anfal women from Germany attended a conference in Berlin on the twentieth anniversary of Anfal.<sup>221</sup> In this context, they attended a commemoration ceremony to honour the victims and survivors of the

**220** The quotes from Anfal women in this chapter are all from work protocols and discussion notes taken within the Anfal Women Memorial Forum Project. For more information see [www.anfalmemorialforum.com](http://www.anfalmemorialforum.com)

**221** The German NGO HAUKARI e.V. invited them to a workshop on »Violence, Memory and Dealing with the Past in Iraq« and a public conference, both of which were organized by HAUKARI and the Zentrum Moderner Orient, Berlin, and held at the Heinrich Böll Foundation in Berlin. They presented testimonies on the Anfal experience and asked for support for

Nazi regime at the former women's concentration camp in Ravensbrück outside Berlin. The design of the Ravensbrück memorial site, the specific remembrance of the women detained here, the exchange with former detainees and their offspring from several European countries and many young Germans' participation in the ceremony made a deep impression on the Kurdish guests. On their return to Kurdistan, they founded an initiative for a memorial site that they would design and manage themselves: the Anfal Women Memorial Forum. The need for and function of such a site were discussed at various informal and public meetings in 2008 and 2009 with between thirty and one hundred and fifty Anfal women. The women agreed that the site should represent their specific experience as women during and after Anfal. The objective of the memorial site was to »keep alive the memories of the missing« and »tell others about the catastrophe that happened to us and especially the next generations so that they don't forget«. They also expressed their desire for a place to meet and mourn together, exchange memories and worries, and carry out joint activities. »It should be a place that really belongs to us,« said one woman, »where nobody can chase us away when high officials come on a visit.« Some women declared they would use the site for current funerals, as well, while Habsa envisaged her own funeral at the memorial site amid the mementos of the missing. Another woman countered: »Why should it only be a place for funerals? We could also celebrate our children's wedding ceremonies in the memorial hall.« Hence, from the very beginning, the memorial site was seen as a place of remembrance and at the same time a symbol of survival that focused on the living. Consequently, the proposal for the memorial site included a large hall for ceremonies and conferences, a number of smaller rooms for the women to meet

their demand to be given evidence, justice and compensation (see [www.haukari.de](http://www.haukari.de)).

and relax, a cafeteria for meetings and other activities and space for exhibitions and mementos.

A statue of a female figure was to be erected in front of the memorial and the names and photographs of the dead or missing were to be inscribed at the entrance.

There was a long and controversial discussion on where the memorial should be located: some wanted it to be near the Anfal cemetery outside the town so that it would be close to the Anfal victims; the majority voted for a location in the town so that it could be reached easily and frequently used.

Criticism and controversy surrounded the memorial project from the start. The Kurdistan government institutions were critical towards the »memory-from-below« initiative, as it contrasted with their ideas on monumental memorials representing the dimension of the Kurdish national tragedy.

In Rizgary, male second-generation survivors, local representatives of Anfal committees and local intellectuals and journalists came to attend project meetings and cast doubt on the importance of the memorial site, claiming that what was genuinely needed were roads, hospitals and schools, not memorials. Yet Anfal women challenged these opinions resolutely, asserting that a place of remembrance and encounters was of great importance to them; they had finally begun to look after themselves and address their own needs.

Since 2009, the Anfal women of Rizgary have been dedicated to the memorial project. They set up a committee to formally represent the initiative with Anfal women and supporters, such as the parliamentarian Gulnaz Aziz Qadir and Srwa Rasheed Mohammed, the former mayor of Rizgary, as members. While approximately twenty women work continuously on the project, some one hundred women take part in project discussions, meetings with artists and public events surrounding the project. The German NGO HAUKARI is present in an advisory function and supports the project with logistics, psychosocial assistance, the organization of exchange with local and international artists and memory projects and funds from private donations and German gov-

ernment donors.<sup>222</sup> A team of local professionals (social workers, logistics experts, photographers and artists) supports the committee. In 2009, 2011, 2012 and 2013, Anfal women from the project, supporters and local artists visited Holocaust memorial sites in various locations in Germany<sup>223</sup> and exchanged ideas with German artists, architects and memory project activists.<sup>224</sup>

Since 2009, Anfal women have been trained locally to enable them to set up a self-help structure and manage the future memorial site. After lengthy discussions with the regional administration and the Kurdistan Regional Government, they have meanwhile gained permission to use a large construction site in the centre of Rizgary opposite the cemetery; the site is visible from the graveyard and vice versa. They have discussed a design for the memorial structure with architects and engineers and successfully lobbied the Kurdistan Regional Government, specifically the Ministry of Martyrs and Anfal Affairs, which in 2013 approved the budget for the construction of the memorial site, based on the plans the Anfal women submitted.

Artists from various regions in Iraqi Kurdistan came to Rizgary. In a number of meetings, Anfal women shared their

**222** See [www.haukari.de](http://www.haukari.de). The project is funded by the German Federal Foreign Office, namely the Institute of Foreign Relations (IFA - projekt zivik).

**223** They visited the Memorial for the Murdered Jews in Europe, Berlin ([www.stiftung-denkmal.de](http://www.stiftung-denkmal.de)), the memorial sites at former Nazi concentration camps in Sachsenhausen ([www.stiftung-bg.de](http://www.stiftung-bg.de)) and Ravensbrück ([www.ravensbrueck.de](http://www.ravensbrueck.de)), the House of the Wannsee Conference in Berlin ([www.ghwk.de](http://www.ghwk.de)), the memorial site at the former Nazi concentration camp Schillstraße in Braunschweig ([www.schillstrasse.de](http://www.schillstrasse.de)), the Jewish cemetery and the memorial Judengasse in Frankfurt am Main ([www.judengasse.de](http://www.judengasse.de)), the memory initiative »Traces of Jewish Life« in Zossen (see <http://zossen.initiativenserver.de/?p=1081>), and several decentralized memory sites in Berlin, including the »Stolpersteine« (stumbling blocks) laid out in front of buildings throughout Berlin commemorating the Jewish citizens who lived there before being deported and murdered by the Nazi regime ([www.stolpersteine.com](http://www.stolpersteine.com)).

**224** See report on the journey: [www.haukari.de/ueber\\_haukari/rundbriefe/pdf/Rundbrief51.pdf](http://www.haukari.de/ueber_haukari/rundbriefe/pdf/Rundbrief51.pdf).

memories with them and discussed the design for a central statue of a woman to be erected in front of the memorial building. The women were very determined about how the figure should be: a woman standing upright with a dead baby in her arms and another child that survived, by her side.

With this concept, the women gave physical contours to one of their most haunting Anfal memories: the deaths of their children during deportation or in prison and the grief that was partly overwritten by anxiety about their other children in need of their care and protection. On the one hand, the design meant remaining in their traditional role as caring mothers in mourning; at the same time, it suggests a break with the prevailing image of passive, »sitting« women, and although it underlines their grief, it also expresses their own and their children's survival and stride towards the future. The size of the statue was likewise discussed at great length. While initially many of the women favoured an oversized figure visible from every point in the town, the debate ended in agreement that it should be little more than life-size. This would allow a more immediate relation among visitors and the statue. This idea was influenced by Habsa and Suhaila's account of the statues of two women in Ravensbrück, which had impressed both of them deeply. One particular aspect was vital to all of them: the statue was to be made of unbreakable material, since it was to »last forever and tell future generations what happened in Germyan«.

After these initial plans were made, artists from all over Kurdistan submitted sketches in a first round of tender and discussed them several times with the women. For the artists this was an entirely new experience. Some spoke of the process as a new quality in contextualized art; others left the project because they felt restricted in their artistic freedom. In a second round of tender, fifteen Kurdish sculptors submitted maquettes based on the women's specifications and measuring ca. 50 cm in height. A discussion of the artistic qualities of the models would exceed the scope of this study. Suffice it to say that the presentation reflects the general dilemma of Kurdish contemporary artists. On the one hand,

they stand in the tradition of state monumentalism; most of them make a living from government commissions that entail monumental works with a national motif, such as figures of martyrs or political leaders. On the other hand, after decades of cultural isolation, they are now eager to catch up on international artistic developments, zealously absorbing European and US styles and techniques. Up to now, there has been little debate on or experience with a specific local art that links Kurdish traditions with the modernization process. One of the side effects of the Anfal memorial project is an intense exchange between German and Kurdish artists on how to develop locally appropriated memory arts and culture.

The artists' endeavours to address Anfal women's precise stipulation of a realistic representation produced models ranging between pathos and naivety.

The maquettes were shown in various informal meetings with Anfal women as well as in exhibitions with a wider public of Anfal survivors and external visitors; they led to intense discussion. .

Throughout the debate, the guiding principle for Anfal women was that models were to be realistic and express as exactly as possible what the women had experienced. Several figures, such as that of a woman sitting on a mound of corpses, were immediately rejected as »unrealistic« or »melodramatic«. The women commented with scrupulous attention to the details of the entries: »This woman is wearing shoes and a bag; we didn't have any shoes when we were deported, and we left our villages with nothing; this woman is dressed for winter, but it was spring when we were deported.« One artist portrayed a woman with a headscarf tied in the traditional Kurdish manner. His intention, he said, was to eliminate »Arabic influences« from his statue and pay tribute to the Kurdish nation and Kurdish tradition. Beyond all ethnic attributions and political correctness, however, the women insisted that they did not wear their headscarves tied this way during Anfal. At the other end of the scale, other figures were criticized precise-

ly because the figures' headscarves were tied in a »non-Kurdish way« (Pottek, 2011).

The figuration of the dead baby proved to be technically challenging for most of the artists. Some of the babies looked asleep rather than dead; others lay unnaturally in their mothers' arms. The suggestion by a German consultant to cover the baby with a sheet as a solution was rejected by the women who stated they didn't have any sheet at the time of Anfal. (ibid., 2011).

The most heated discussions among artists, consultants and Anfal women revolved around the emotional expression of the statue. Should the statue symbolize the horror of the Anfal experience or focus on the strength of the survivors? Should the figure's stance reflect the years of waiting or underline the uncompromising attempt to survive despite tremendous adversity? How could the figure portray the specific unresolvable grief of Anfal survivors and distinguish it from the suffering of the mothers of killed *peshmerga* or executed prisoners? Most of the models failed to express grief and pride simultaneously, focusing on one emotion only. One artist submitted a seated Pietà-like figure that conveyed exhaustion and grief. The women criticized it for its disregard of their specification that the figure should be upright. They claimed, »Yes, we were exhausted, but we had no time to sit down. We had to keep going for our children.« Akhtar, on the other hand, the woman who lost her entire family to Anfal, sat in front of the statue for a long time and – swaying back and forth – concluded, »This is me exactly.«

Another entry showed a woman raising her dead child towards heaven. Here Anfal women were of the opinion that it was more suited to portraying the fate of mothers who had lost their children in the Halabja gas attack. The figure of a woman staring into the distance was felt by many to symbolize precisely the uncertainty and the waiting that was their lot after Anfal. Interestingly, this figure was selected as the favourite in a meeting of Anfal women with representatives of the Ministry of Martyrs and Anfal Affairs, who all voted for it because of its clear focus on disappearance. In meetings

of Anfal women only, however, it was somewhat overlooked despite its political message. The women found it difficult to relate to the figure because they considered its clothing inaccurate: The figure wore shoes and a winter jacket while Anfal in Germyan occurred in April.

In the discussions, the women spontaneously ignored statues with dramatic expressions, favouring instead more contemplative figures that expressed moments of intimacy and focused on the mother-and-child relationship. Many of the women chose a bronze statue as their favourite because the female figure had an upright posture and conveyed strength. »This is a Germyan woman; Germyan women are tough.« (The statue was in fact the only one submitted by an artist from the Germyan region).

On the whole, the women's approach to the statues was driven by a desire to see a realistic representation, rather than a political message or artistic symbolism.

During the discussions, the women developed an almost physical relationship to the different models. They knelt down in front of them, walked around them, sat beside them, spoke to them and touched them, took them in their hands, caressed the children's heads. (When Habsa and Suhaila visited Germany, they did the same with the female statues at the memorial site in Ravensbrück, saying, »We know how they felt, they're like us.«)

After scores of meetings, five statues were finally short-listed and the artists were asked to rework the figures to incorporate the women's comments. The selection process is on-going and, in my view, this process of discussion is much more important than a quick decision and a finished work of art. The discussion process reflects the women's ambivalent feelings about Anfal, their constant oscillating between grief and pride, between sticking to the past and heading towards the future, between their self-definition as victims and as survivors. The discussion process gives them a chance to express and articulate these ambivalent and often contrasting feelings beyond verbal articulation and without forcing them into a decision. Indeed, plans have meanwhile

emerged to exhibit all of the models and their various stages as a »work-in-progress sculpture park« to be incorporated in the garden of the memorial site.

In May 2012, the project committee and staff set about preparing a permanent exhibition of photographs to be housed in the future memorial forum. At this point, the initiative was a response to Anfal women's growing impatience with the Kurdish government's delay in approving construction of the memorial site. The exhibition would anticipate and flesh out the memorial site independently of the construction start. Survivors and local artists discussed the concept of the exhibition and were advised by the German professor of fine arts, Michael Fehr, who visited the memorial site and trained local photographers. The initial idea of giving a name and a face to the Anfal disappeared developed into a gallery of photographs of Anfal survivors holding pictures or other mementos of the disappeared. Hence the photographs tell two stories, focusing on both victims and survivors.

Since May 2010, regular photograph appointments have been offered at a fixed location in Rizgary: Anfal survivors are portrayed in front of a mud wall reminiscent of the walls of rural houses in Germyan.<sup>225</sup> Many women bring photographs of their missing relatives; others come with artefacts, such as their husbands' tobacco pouches or a piece of clothing; yet others have nothing left and instead write the names of missing relatives on the palms of their hands or a sheet of paper. Biographical data of Anfal survivors is recorded; mementos are photographed and registered for future artefact exhibitions. More recently, the photographers have begun to visit locations and villages around Rizgary with a mobile photo studio in order to reach a greater number of survivors. The gallery meanwhile comprises some one thousand photographs. The permanent exhibition of an expected number of one thousand five hundred photographs will be one of the

**225** The portrait photos in this thesis are all from this photo documentation in the memorial project.

key elements of the memorial forum after construction. The places where the photographs are taken have themselves become memory sites, points of reference and exchange for Anfal survivors: they gather here, exchange news and stories, observe each other being photographed and help each other find mementos. Women like Akhtar and Najiba and older men like Haji Ibrahim spend a lot of time in the photo room, closely following the progress of the exhibition.

The photographic exhibition drew a growing number of older and second-generation male Anfal survivors to the project. Although men initially had reservations about a memorial site specifically for Anfal women, they now come frequently with photographs of their wives, mothers and daughters, and they voice their appreciation of a place that will honour their memory. Fifty per cent of the portraits are meanwhile of male survivors. While this is certainly a sign of growing acceptance of the memorial project, it also reflects the difference in men and women's mobility. The project team came across a number of women whose sons or other male relatives did not allow them to have their photograph taken.

In 2011, about six hundred photographs of survivors were exhibited alongside the statue maquettes in the public library in Rizgary and later in the Cultural Hall in Erbil at the invitation of the Ministry of Martyrs and Anfal Affairs. The large number of visitors to the exhibition helped to spread the project idea throughout Kurdistan, giving Anfal women a forum for broader articulation of their needs and claims. The exhibition in Erbil was of particular importance to Anfal women: twenty-five of them came to Erbil by bus to attend the opening of the exhibition in the presence of governmental officials and representatives of embassies and cultural institutes. For most Anfal women, this was their first visit to the Kurdish capital of Erbil; and for most visitors to the exhibition, it was their first direct encounter with women Anfal survivors from Germyan. Television and radio channels from Kurdistan, central Iraq and Iran broadcast interviews with Anfal women, and one Kurdish public television channel

(Kurdistan TV) reserved an hour of its morning programme to the presentation and discussion of the memorial project. Subsequently, the memorial project committee was invited to show the exhibition in other locations throughout Kurdistan and received several requests to set up similar projects in other Anfal-affected regions.

The key moment for Anfal women at the Erbil event was a meeting with the then newly appointed Minister of Martyrs and Anfal Affairs. After his opening speech, he invited the women to lunch and organized a spontaneous two-hour discussion during which they had time to briefly outline their personal stories and express their demands. Some asked for higher pensions or referred to injustices in the pension and grant system. Most of them, however, focused on the demand for a rapid return and identification of the bodies of Anfal victims, for justice and specifically for the punishment of collaborators, compensation, an apology by the Iraqi government and support for the memorial project. The women finally departed in the late afternoon for Rizgary in high spirits. Many commented: »This was a great day.« Two days later I came to Rizgary and found that the details of the meeting with the minister had spread like wildfire throughout the survivor community.

When I met the women who had attended the event, they were still exuberant. They said it was the first time they had been on a par with a minister and appreciated his patience, empathy and inclusive approach. They were proud of having spoken up at the meeting. Suhaila kept saying, »Our women spoke really well.« There was, however, some dissent. Those who had expressed more collective demands criticized other women who merely spoke of their personal economic problems to the minister: »We should have spoken with one voice to achieve something, and not have some people going on about their personal problems.«

They joked about the minister's surprise at »us illiterate women having mobile phones and knowing how to speak in front of the minister and the TV cameras«. They burst out laughing every time they thought of some awkward situa-

tions, e.g. when one woman had boxed the minister undiplomatically saying, »You want to know what happened to me?«

There had been some disconcertment when, during lunch, the minister's staff handed each woman an envelope containing US\$100. Some felt this gesture was inappropriate and undermined the political thrust of their appearance at the exhibition. Some also feared that »now that the women who came to Erbil got money, next time everyone'll just come for the money«. Some, however, saw the donation as an additional sign of the minister's respect for them. One woman remarked pragmatically, »It could have been a bit more.«

The process of government approval of and budgeting for the memorial site accelerated in the months that followed. The minister and his staff returned several times to Rizgary, spoke to survivors and elaborated plans to modify his ministry's policy to the extent of focusing on survivors rather than victims. Hence within the bigger picture of socio-economic change, growing political opposition and a controversial societal Anfal debate, the memorial project has certainly been a contributing factor in this paradigm shift.

The impact of the project was particularly evident at the memorial ceremony at Rizgary cemetery on 14 April 2012, which incorporated the exhibition of up to a thousand photographs of survivors. The entire population of Rizgary began to make their way to the cemetery in the early morning. The ceremony opened with speeches by the Minister of Martyrs and Anfal Affairs and local politicians. Poems were read and wreaths laid. Once again, none of the Anfal women spoke at the ceremony. Many left the site before the speeches were over. In previous years, rows and rows of survivors had turned to the graves after the speeches, where women mourned and wailed until they were no longer able. This year they visited the graves and spent time there, but then turned to the photographic exhibition, where an intense exchange took place. Men and women looked for their own photographs, showed them to their children and their relatives and talked about the whereabouts of those portrayed.

The project committee was overrun by requests for photograph appointments by those who had not yet been photographed. For me, this scenario epitomized the coexistence of the past and the present. It exemplified the importance of both spaces to remember and mourn and spaces for activities and encouragement to relate to the here and now. It seemed like a metaphor that showed how survivors conquer space alongside the victims and take an active role in the public memorialization of Anfal.

The photo exhibition has since been shown in various other cities of Kurdistan-Iraq and offered occasions for Anfal women to bring their voices into public debate.

As for the development of an architectural concept for the construction of the memorial site, there has been an intense and often controversial discussion between Anfal women and local and international architects. The women expressed their desire for a building that should be impressive and visible to live up to the dimension of Anfal but at the same time offer a liveable place to come together, relax and share social activities. They had also opted for a clear architectural relation to the cemetery, which is situated at some distance opposite to the construction site.

However, most of the designs submitted by local architects were stuck in monumental ideas of depicting the Anfal catastrophe, neglecting the social functions of the memorial site. Some of the design proposals envisaged large glass fronts and impressive open spaces, but were difficult to realize and later to maintain in the hot and dusty climate of Rizgary. After five years of discussion, ultimately a design proposal made by the German architects Ingrid Moye and Christoph Zeller was enthusiastically accepted by the women (see photo section). It integrates a large meeting hall, exhibition rooms and social places into a protecting external wall and thus addresses the women's wish to have an intimate and protected place. It combines traditional materials with modern forms; thus the building falls in line with the German landscape and is visible and extraordinary at the same time. An accessible roof offers the possibility to look

towards the cemetery thus addressing the women's wish for a symbolic connection to the dead.

Anfal women's associations with the design are differing: Some say, the outside wall reminds them of their original German villages, where the houses were also protected by mud walls. Others instead see the external wall as a symbolic reminder of their suffering in the notorious prison of Nugra Salman. »But behind the prison walls«, they say, »we enter into a green space, a symbol for new life«. The walkable roof offers the possibility to look at the cemetery and thus symbolizes the women's close relation and loyalty to the dead. The huge protected garden offers space for coming together, relaxing and joint activities etc. and still keeps relationship with the dead through the photos of victims and survivors exhibited around the internal wall. Thus all components of the design represent the strong relation between past and present and thus the women Anfal survivors' long way from victims to survivors.

The design has meanwhile been accepted also by the Ministry of Martyrs and Anfal Affairs. Construction is envisaged for 2015.

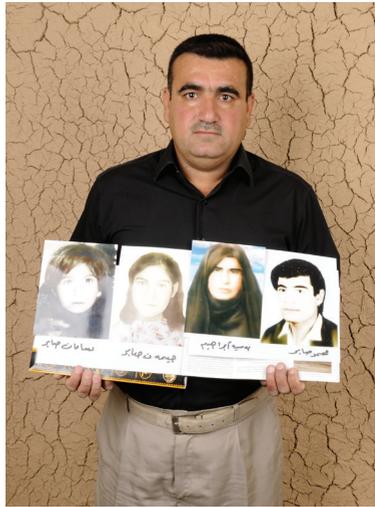
These achievements of the memorial project notwithstanding, I have no intention to present the Anfal memorial project as a »success story«. It is certainly not without its challenges and ruptures. Of the many women Anfal survivors, only a small group of some twenty active women like Hataw, Suhaila and Habsa genuinely see the project as their initiative. Other women's participation tends to be volatile and to depend on external encouragement or incentives. Women like Amira and Rabea eventually join major events like exhibitions, but do not actively engage. Other women like Faima and Payman generally have difficulties focusing their energies on long-term commitments. Many women tend to lose patience at every delay in the project and become suspicious that the initiative might be mere »talk«. In the light of substantial adverse winds against the project coming from local Anfal committees afraid of losing influence, from a government with an inclination to monopolize

memory and from second-generation male survivors anxious about their mothers' reputation, many of the Anfal women who participate are torn between loyalties. More recently, the growing influence of the political opposition movement in the Germyan area has led to frictions and conflicts among the women who participate in the project. Attempts by both the government and the opposition to exploit the Anfal women's cause for political purposes pose a constant threat to the project and even logistic problems, for example when it comes to finding politically »neutral« locations for project meetings. German funding and support has thus far secured the project's neutrality. On the other hand, precisely this involvement of German donors, organizations and advisors has also been the subject of controversial discussions: doesn't German involvement carry the risk of distorting and overwriting what should be a genuine Kurdish development of memory culture and politics? And isn't there a risk of importing the aesthetic and content of a memory culture developed in a perpetrator rather than in a survivor society? A response to these questions is crucial as the Kurdistan Regional Government strongly pushes for the German-Kurdish project cooperation as a possibility to underpin its claims for recognition of Anfal as genocide.

Beyond these considerations, it can be summarized that the Anfal memorial project has strengthened the networks of Anfal women in Rizgary and its surroundings. In a time when the women's most important resource, their collective structures, is tending to erode, it has created new collective spaces as points of encounter and reference. Under the auspices of the project, Anfal women find a space to express their ambivalent and painful feelings, to exchange and jointly re-work their memories of violence, loss and marginalization and to transform them into proposals for the design of the memorial. In addition, they transcend their role as passive victims, enter into dialogue with other social groups and engage in the public debate on the memorialization of Anfal. By deploying their own memories, narratives and images of their suffering and of their resources, they develop a

counter-narrative to their primary representation as passive victims and challenge the Kurdish national Anfal discourse. Hence, although not originally designed as a psychological intervention or based on a psychological discourse of trauma, the initiative combines therapeutic aspects with empowerment and provides a space for Anfal women to collectively cope with their traumatic experiences.





*Design proposal Anfal Women Memorial Forum, Rizgary, Kurdistan-Iraq  
by the architectural office Zeller and Moyer (© Zeller & Moyer)*



*Approach from town*



*Photo gallery and garden*



*Terrace viewpoint*



*Memorial Forum*

## 17 Conclusions

### *Summary*

My research has given a picture of the complex situation of Kurdish women who survived the Anfal Campaign that the Baath regime carried out in Iraqi Kurdistan in 1988. It addresses the long-term impact of a crime of extreme violence against a large group of people, which has rarely been explored from a psychological perspective. It focuses on a tightly-knit group of women Anfal survivors living in the former resettlement camp of Sumud in the Germyan area who perceive themselves as a group of Anfal women. Based on rich practical work and the analysis of Anfal women's narratives and interactions in different time periods, my research traces the changes in their social realities and coping strategies through a period of social and political change in Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan over the last twenty years.

The women share experiences of extreme violence and loss during Anfal that clearly qualify to be defined as traumatic. They suffered an abrupt and massive attack on their rural lives and the destruction of their entire economic and social context. To this day, they have no evidence of the individual fates of the relatives they saw deported. Most of them were exposed to atrocities and humiliation in the detention camps and witnessed the death of numerous children and elderly people.

Exploring their narrations of the Anfal experience, my research has given an insight into Anfal women's own per-

spective, their »subjective truth from inside the violent experience« (Laub, 1992) and shown how their narratives transformed over time. The women's detached and fragmented way of narrating Anfal in the 1990s reveals the destructive impact of trauma on the capacity to remember and on the structure of memory. The principal motifs in their narratives reflect shock, disorientation and horror to this day and show their feelings of guilt and shame at their failure to protect their families, specifically their children, and their exposure to physical and sometimes sexualized violence. The women's self- and world-concepts were deeply shattered.

The analysis of their narrations reveals protective aspects, as well: in a continuous communicative process within the survivor group, these women have interwoven their own memories with those of others into one collective narrative of suffering. This allows them to speak out and at the same time grants them some anonymity and protection from painful exposure to their individual experiences of violence and loss. The women's collectively shared Anfal narrative thus reflects the central dynamics of coping with trauma: the oscillation between the wish to speak out and to deny (Herman, 1992) and between intrusion and avoidance. In my interpretation, it has assumed a trauma-protective function, enabling the women to survive and raise their children despite the horrific adversities they met in the aftermath of Anfal. This aspect of my research adds to the findings on the important role that trauma narratives and testimonies play in the coping process (see for example Laub, 1992, Weine & Chae, 2008).

I have furthermore examined their psychosocial realities in the period when they were under the control of the perpetrators in the immediate aftermath of Anfal, throughout the years of provisional Kurdish autonomy in the 1990s and after the fall of the Baath regime in 2003. I have shown the agonizing impact that uncertainty about the fate of their relatives had on Anfal women's lives and their emotional state for more than fifteen years after Anfal. They daily oscillated

between hope and despair, lived in uninterrupted psychological stress, were unable to go through a mourning process and were blocked from developing new life perspectives by a sense of obligation and guilt towards the missing. They inhabited the liminal sphere between life and death (Hamber & Wilson 2002). In these ways, they shared the symptoms of suffering presented by relatives of the disappeared in other socio-political and cultural contexts.

In addition, Anfal women faced a series of social, political and economic constraints that confined their range of agency and prolonged and reinforced their inner liminality. With the Baath regime still in power and the status of the Kurdish region politically insecure, dread of another catastrophe was omnipresent. The fabric of society in Germyan was utterly destroyed, male breadwinners were missing and support from the Kurdish government and humanitarian organizations was sporadic, leaving Anfal women to live in extreme poverty throughout the 1990s, absorbed in a daily struggle for survival and the task of raising their often numerous children. Their mobility was restricted by a traditional, patriarchal social environment that did not provide a social status or life concept for women without a male breadwinner and guardian. Their social and legal status was unclear. They had to guard the honour of the missing without enjoying the latter's protection and provision. Remarriage was emotionally inconceivable, socially stigmatized and coupled with the loss of their children. Hence, Anfal women were constantly torn between the need to earn a living and the social expectation that they fulfil their traditional gender roles. Bitterness about the lack of assistance and recognition from the Kurdish government, political parties and society in general added to their distress. Caught in this web of social, political and economic strictures that interacted with their inner psychological distress, they internalized being socially defined by the absence of their male relatives to a symbiotic point where they perceived their lives as »disappeared with Anfal«.

My research also highlights, however, the inexhaustible strength and fortitude of these women and their ability to survive despite all constraints and bring up their children without male or family assistance. Apart from family support (where given) and individual resources like religiosity and political convictions, that helped the women to give a meaning to their experience, their main sources of strength were their children and their collective structure based on the shared experience of violence. They developed strong bonds of solidarity and vast informal networks that became a source of support and consolation.

For more than fifteen years after Anfal, however, they remained in provisional living conditions, their hopes fixed on the return of their missing relatives.

Only with the fall of the Baath regime in 2003 did their lives undergo radical change. When more than three hundred mass graves were discovered throughout Iraq, the women received painful certainty about the death of the victims of the Anfal Campaign; since evidence of the fates of individual victims has not been forthcoming, however, the agony of uncertainty continues.

The demise of Saddam Hussein and the Iraqi constitution's provision for Kurdish autonomy finally restored a sense of safety and stability. The economic upturn in the Kurdish region allowed the Kurdistan Regional Government to increase pensions for Anfal survivors, to distribute land and financial grants for the construction of houses and to modernize the infrastructure in the Anfal regions. Anfal women's economic conditions have significantly improved thus ending their struggle for survival. Furthermore, the now grown-up sons and daughters of Anfal survivors established new family contexts and gave their mothers new social roles as mothers-in-law and grandmothers. The remarkable impact of economic and social change on the women's psychological state emphasizes the important role of a stable and safe environment for coping with trauma: the end of uncertainty, fear and economic stress, along with the newly emerging family contexts, enable Anfal women to finally rest

and think about their own lives and perspectives. Though they continue to be haunted by traumatic images and bear multiple symptoms of stress, anxiety and restlessness, most of them have now visibly relaxed. They have reconstructed their daily routine and social relations and have begun to engage in social activities. Although their lives remain overshadowed by the multiple losses they suffered, they have found a balance between commemorating Anfal and relating to the present. They draw pride and satisfaction from having survived, enjoy moments of peace and joy with their children and grandchildren and rebuild their communities, thus underlining their victory over the destructive power of violence.

On the other hand, rebuilding the social fabric of German exclusively along traditional patrilineal family patterns has led today to differentiation and individualization within the once homogeneous group and to the erosion of their dense collective structure. This trend has been reinforced by second-generation male survivors who attempt to restore patriarchal power within the family and once again restrict their mothers' mobility. Anfal women nonetheless continue to take recourse to each other and to exchange and interweave their individual experiences in a collectively shared Anfal narrative. They strongly perceive themselves as a group and jointly articulate their needs and claims.

With the economic, social and political changes, Anfal women's narratives have also transformed. Whereas in the 1990s the women were immersed in fragmented and traumatic images, today they speak about Anfal from a more historicized perspective, summarizing the experience in a few symbolic images and embedding it in previous and subsequent experiences. They thus, in trauma-therapy terms, integrate the trauma into their biographies. Repressed memories of sexual violence and of betrayal by Kurdish collaborators come to the fore. The focus of their narratives shifts from the missing and the dead to the women's own fates during Anfal and in the aftermath. They refer more and more to the strengths and resources that helped them

to survive and raise their children and to the related survivors' pride. While in the 1990s their claims were confined to economic assistance, today they strongly voice their demands for truth, justice, compensation and social and political acknowledgement of their ordeal. They thus clearly transcend their individual situation and needs and link with the broader political discourse at the Iraqi national and Kurdish regional levels.

The trials against and the execution of the main perpetrators of Anfal – Saddam Hussein and Ali Hassan al-Majid – were important milestones for Anfal women and partly addressed their desire for justice and gave them a sense of relief and satisfaction, thus underlining the importance of justice for the individual coping process. However, at the Iraqi national level, on-going violence and political conflict in Iraq have removed further steps of transitional justice and institutional dealing with past crimes from the political agenda. The discrepancy between the women's desire for truth, justice and acknowledgement and a political process that focuses on an inclusive compromise to end the current violence has underpinned Anfal women's deep-seated mistrust of the Iraqi national government and more generally of Arab Iraqis and has led to alienation from the national process. As a result, Anfal women align themselves exclusively within the Kurdish regional framework.

In the political discourse at the Kurdish regional level, Anfal is instead perceived as a national trauma, constituent of the Kurdish national identity and crucial to legitimating Kurdish claims to autonomy and a share of power at the Iraqi national level. This discourse depicts Anfal women as national symbols of the Kurdish tragedy, thus sacralising and further victimizing the women and overwriting their concrete and complex experiences of suffering. However, with growing self-confidence in recent years, Anfal women have increasingly challenged the national victimhood discourse by focusing on their strengths and their contribution to the liberation struggle, by expressing their outrage at the long years of negligence from the Kurdish political elite and by

voicing politically explosive demands, such as for the punishment of Kurdish collaborators. My research has unfolded the complex interplay between individual, collective and national Anfal narratives and its repercussions on Anfal women's self-perception. Torn between their loyalty to the dead and what La Capra terms »fidelity to trauma« (1992), on the one hand, and their wish to live and relate to the present, on the other hand, and thus between victimhood and agency, they partly identify with the victim image as an identity marker and as a form of social acknowledgement. But they also rebel against this image's disempowering effect and the political exploitation of their suffering.

My study concludes with a description of my working experience in the Anfal Women Memorial Forum Project, in which women actively engage in the construction of a self-designed and self-administered memorial site in Rizgari. The example illustrates once again the ambivalent feelings of Anfal women between loyalty to the past and their desire to relate to the present. It shows how Anfal women reconquer a social space as survivors without sidelining the memory of the victims. The project creates a social space for the women to articulate their ambivalences and strengthen their collective structure and political participation. It thus combines therapeutic aspects with empowerment, providing an example of a psychosocial intervention beyond a trauma-focused therapy approach.

Based on the example of Anfal women, my research shows once again the devastating, long-term impact of violence on the victims' self-perception and world views and underlines the dialectic between avoidance and intrusion in individual processes of coping with trauma. Moreover, it is a powerful illustration of the complex intertwining of the individual experience of trauma and the concomitant coping strategies with the socio-economic and political context in which it occurs. It describes how uncertainty, political instability and poverty prolong and reinforce trauma. It demonstrates the paralyzing impact of patriarchal gender roles in the specific

Kurdish context and contributes to debates on gendered experiences of violence. Taking recourse to resource- and agency-centred approaches, my research explores Anfal women's trauma-protective resilience factors and emphasizes that – beyond personal resources – physical safety, political and economic security and social support are indispensable for addressing and integrating traumatic experiences. Hence it reaffirms the vital significance of a safe environment and more generally of stabilization as a prerequisite for coping with trauma. My research shows the consolation inherent in collectively shared experiences and, more specifically, in collectively shared trauma narrations and emphasizes the role of these narrations in the coping process, thereby contributing to an understanding of the collective dimension of trauma and strategies for coping with trauma. Overall, my research underlines the political and social dimension of trauma and adds to a socially and politically contextualized debate on trauma and to the abundant academic and practice-based literature on survivors of extreme violence in many different contexts.

By analysing Anfal women's memories and narratives and their transformation over time, my research also contributes to the vast field of memory research. It shows the fragmenting impact of trauma on memory, but underlines that traumatic memory is not static or »frozen«, as some cultural trauma theories suggest, but is constantly transformed in communication with others and in correlation with the political and social context. In this sense, it emphasizes the social constructedness and communicative character of memory. It explores the complex interaction between individual, collective and political Anfal discourses and their repercussion on the survivors' self-perception: the disempowering effect of discourses of victimhood and of the political exploitation of suffering, on the one hand, and the consoling and mobilizing force of a respectful and authentic representation, on the other. It therefore relates and contributes to concepts of collective and social memory and to an understanding of the hitherto under-researched dynamics of »collective trauma«,

or more precisely, of collectively shared trauma (Kühner, 2008).

Ultimately, my research links the psychological trauma discourse to the broader political and sociological debate on transitional processes in post-conflict societies. Taking the example of women Anfal survivors, it demonstrates the discrepancy between the essential desire of survivors of violence for truth, justice and acknowledgment in order to cope with their trauma, on the one hand, and the political dynamics of transition processes, on the other. While at the political level, stability and social peace require a balance between remembering and forgetting and inclusive compromises with former perpetrators, survivors of violence need truth if they are to find rest and the punishment or at least accountability of the perpetrators if they are to rebuild their trust in the political system. They have no choice between remembering and forgetting (Hamber & Wilson, 2002).

The tension between psychological and political perspectives on the transition process is inherent in all societies after violent conflict and war (Hamber, 2009), but is more accentuated where violence and conflict is on-going, as is the case today in Iraq. Here, the political exploitation of contrasting narratives of victimhood from various past and current phases in the struggle for power translates into rivalry among different groups of victims, deepens the fragmentation of society and corrodes ideas of reconciliation. Beyond legal and institutional measures, multiple social and public spaces are needed to address the claims of survivors of violence, spaces in which contrasting narratives can be articulated and remembered. In this context, my research also points to the significance of memorial sites and remembrance ceremonies, notably for missing persons' relatives, who lack places to mourn.

*Reflections*

My research undoubtedly leaves many aspects unaddressed and indicates the numerous challenges for further research.

I have given little attention to cultural and religious aspects of coping with trauma. Nor have I looked at women Anfal survivors in a »Muslim context« or examined specific »Kurdish« cultural practices of mourning. This reflects my scepticism about the recent focus on culture and religion in the trauma debate, which tends to disconnect trauma as a cultural phenomenon from the »hardware« experience of violence and its impact, which in my view cuts across cultures and religion.

My thesis focuses on a limited group of women survivors living in a former resettlement camp. Comparative studies of Anfal survivors who returned to their original villages or live in other Anfal-affected regions will be required if a comprehensive picture of their differing circumstances and of the impact of the latter on their psychological state is to be gained. To my knowledge, the situation of elderly male survivors has not yet been addressed. The latter's stories still have to be told, and an exploration of their circumstances in comparison with Anfal women will add insights to the gendered nature of experiencing and coping with trauma.

While my research provides detailed knowledge of the dynamics surrounding Anfal at the Kurdish regional level, my observations at the Iraqi national level remain general. This is due to my focus on Kurdistan, as well as to the volatile security situation and my limited encounters with victims of violence and political stakeholders from other regions in Iraq. Comparative studies on survivors of past and current violence in different regions in Iraq that explore their similarities and differences and the conflicts that arise between them will be needed to develop a psychological perspective on the broader process of transition in Iraq.

Based on the findings of my current research and my own working experience, however, and given the concrete example of the Anfal Women Memorial forum Project in Rizgary,

my thesis advocates for a resource- and agency-oriented, long-term psychosocial approach to work with survivors of violence, combining therapeutic aspects with a broader engagement for the improvement of their life situations and political participation.

The recent »neurobiological turn« in psychological trauma discourse and practice has jeopardized this political approach to trauma, leading to therapy concepts that are strongly individualized and decontextualized. A group of German academics and practitioners associated with the »vivo« project at the University of Constance (e.g. Schauer et al., 2005; Neuner, 2008) have for example openly criticized contextualized trauma concepts and labelled stabilization before exposure as unnecessary. Based on recent findings on neurobiological memory processes, they instead practice standardized Narrative Exposure Therapies (NET) for survivors of violence in various conflict regions with little regard of the specific cultural and political context. The advance of the NET concept and other short-term therapy approaches has been accelerated by a fatal alliance with policy-makers and financial donors in the national health systems and international aid sector, many of whom are driven by considerations of cost-effectiveness in dealing with the impact of violence and conflict. Such approaches have gained currency to the point of modifying the Diagnostic Manual for Trauma Work of the German Psychiatric Association. Here, stabilization has recently been removed from the catalogue of essential requirements for trauma therapy (see Merk, 2012). In the light of the global extension of capitalist market logic, however, the advance of NET and similar approaches is merely a symptom of a more general trend towards decontextualizing and pathologizing human suffering. Exacerbated stress in the capitalist centres leads to booming rates of »burnout syndrome« and the mass labelling of children as ADHS patients (Brandl, 2007). An armada of trauma experts address and control the impact of marginalization, extreme poverty and violence in many parts of the world. In a symposium organized by medico

international entitled »The Uneasiness in Globalization«,<sup>226</sup> practitioners and academics from the fields of medicine, psychology and social work critically discussed this trend and urgently called for psychological research and practice that would address the root cause of the suffering, rather than treat the symptoms, and hence for a re-politicization of the debate. I hope that my research, which underlines once again the socio-political dimensions of trauma, will contribute to such an endeavour.

Beyond all contextualization and re-politicization, my research also shows the limits of the trauma discourse. It questions the relevance of the concept of trauma and the related notion of »healing« and recovery for Anfal women and more generally for survivors of extreme violence. Although the women all suffer from what qualifies as symptoms of trauma discourse, not a single woman defines her suffering in psychological terms. They see their current pain and anxiety as a normal reaction to what they have gone through. They would instead consider it »abnormal« not to have nightmares about their missing relatives and dead children. And they would reject the idea of »healing« or »closure« as a betrayal of the victims and their own past. None of them asks for psychological help; they rather feel insulted by offers of psychiatric or psychological intervention. They have instead all these years made use of their individual and collective resources to develop protective coping mechanisms in the collective - without any therapeutic support. Their current demands focus on financial aid, social space, justice, truth and acknowledgement, which clearly transcend their individual sphere and are located in the social and political realm.

To this day, the armada of international trauma experts has not yet arrived in Kurdistan and Iraq. When international organizations abounded in the early 1990s, trauma care

**226** See reports on the meeting: <http://www.medico.de/themen/aktion/konferenzen/dokumente/das-unbehagen-in-derglobalisierung/4213/>.

had not yet become an integral component of the humanitarian mission; today only few international organizations are active in Kurdistan-Iraq. The Berlin Rehabilitation Centre for Torture Victims (BZFO) is among the few organizations that have set up trauma care centres. Moreover, the Kurdish government plans to introduce psychological centres in the Anfal regions and is seeking international advice in an attempt to gain more attention for the Anfal case. Based on my own work and research among Anfal women, I would strongly recommend that local policy-makers and international trauma experts be cautious about setting up specific psychotherapeutic or trauma-focussed programmes for Anfal survivors. I argue that offering individual psychotherapy to Anfal women, particularly when it focuses on exposure, would not only fail to address their multiple social and political needs and claims. It would also run the risk of pathologizing and individualizing them and thus undermine their most powerful resource: their collective structure and the related trauma-protective coping strategies they have developed. Support for Anfal survivors should instead adopt an integrative approach combining psychological assistance with economic, social and legal counselling, as well as advocacy for political and societal recognition. Approaches to Anfal women as »traumatized clients« would rather cement their already strong self-perception as passive victims. Instead, social spaces should be created in which Anfal women can maintain and strengthen their collective bonds and build on their inner resources, reinforcing their self-help networks and reciprocal solidarity. This would help them to step out of their role as victims and empower them to bring their authentic testimonies and their vital claims for respect and acknowledgement into current social and political life and public debate.

In my study, I have tried to avoid victimizing and compassionate views of Anfal women; a difficult endeavour in the light of the devastating experiences of violence they have undergone and the many sheer unbearable stories of atrocities and

suffering I listened to in the course of my work. Throughout my research, I was myself constantly torn between the desire to »let the world know« about these women's multi-layered suffering and the wish to focus on their strength and their pride. When I wrote about the multiple constraints that led to their freezing in the role of victim, I found I was in fact dramatizing their fate; when I outlined the many positive changes after 2003, I felt I was trivializing the dimension of their traumatic past. My research and more specifically the process of writing this book seems somehow to mirror the ambivalences of Anfal women and their perpetual oscillation between the past and the present, between victimhood and agency, between trauma and recovery. I hope I have succeeded in living up to my aim of describing the plight of women Anfal survivors and at the same time addressing their admirable courage and resilience. For me, however, the most enriching experience has been the participative character of the research process itself, which evolved in continuous contact and communication with Anfal women. I had various occasions to discuss and revise my findings with them. The research also progressed in close interplay with the development of the Anfal Women Memorial Forum Project in Rizgary. Many of my findings have been informed by practical experience in the project; they have also fed back into the project and helped the women to reflect on achievements and obstacles, and thus to develop next project steps. It is a source of great satisfaction to me that my research has already been of some use to the Anfal women in Rizgary, and I hope that once it is published it will contribute to drawing local and international attention to their situation and strengthen their demands for truth, justice and acknowledgement.

## 18 References

- Abd ar-Rahman, Z. (pseudonym for Najmaddin Rashid Abdullah Fakeh) (1995) *Tuni Merg. Herishekanienfal le belgenamekanirijem da* [Death crematorium: The Anfal operations from the regime's documents]. Tabriz, Iran.
- Abdullah, C. S. (2007, October 11). The Kurdish Holocaust [Interview by Khidhir, Q.]. Retrieved from <http://www.kurdishglobe.net/display-article.html?id=9A9FE9A8610908E07B1DFDDE2E77A4C6>
- Abdullah, C. S. (2008). Crimes of mass murder against the Kurdish people and their consequences (pp. 212-223). In *International conference on genocide against the Kurdish People. Erbil 26-28 January 2008*. Erbil: Aras Press.
- Abdullah, K. O. (2009). Studying the background radiation from the soil of Halabja City. *Journal of Zankoy Sulaimani*, 12(1), 119-123.
- Ahmad, A. (2008). Kurdistan revisited. A psychosocial survey on the Anfal survivors (pp. 212-223). In *International conference on genocide against the Kurdish people*. Erbil 26-28 January 2008. Erbil: Arras Press.
- Ahmad, A., Sundelin-Wahlsten, V., von Knorring, A.L. & Sofi, M.A. (2000). Posttraumatic stress disorder in children after the military operation »Anfal« in Iraqi Kurdistan. *European Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, 9, 235-243.
- Ala'Aldeen, D. A. A. (2005). Long term hazards of chemical weapon agents: Analysis of soil samples from Kurdistan years after exposure to sulphur mustard and nerve agents. Available from dlawer.net website: <http://www.dlawer.net/?q=node/71>.
- al-Ali, N. & Pratt, N. (2009). *What kind of liberation? Women and the occupation of Iraq*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- al-Daraji, M. (director) (2009). *Son of Babylon* [Drama]. Iraq, United Kingdom et al.: Iraq Al-Rafidain, UK Film Council, Human Film et al.

- al-Jawaheri, Y. H. (2008). *Women in Iraq: The gender impact of international sanctions*. London: I.B. Tauris.
- al-Khalil, S. (1989). *The republic of fear. The politics of modern Iraq*. London: Century Hutchinson.
- Alexander, J., Eyerman, R., Giesen, B., Smelser, N. J. & Sztompka, P. (2004). *Cultural trauma and collective identity*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- American Psychiatric Association (1980). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (3rd ed.). Washington, DC: APA.
- Améry, J. (1986). *At the mind's limits. Contemplations by a survivor on Auschwitz and its realities*. New York: Schocken Books. (Originally published 1965).
- Amnesty International (1982). Nicht die Erde hat sie verschluckt. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer.
- Amnesty International (1996). Bosnia-Herzegovina: »To bury my brother's bones«. Available from [www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3ae6a9df0.html](http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3ae6a9df0.html)
- Amnesty International (2005a). Iraq: Decades of suffering. Now women deserve better. Available from <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE14/001/2005>.
- Amnesty International (2005b). Iraqi Special Tribunal: Fair trials not guaranteed. Available from <http://www.amnesty.org/pt-br/library/info/MDE14/007/2005/en>.
- Amnesty International (2007). Iraq: Execution of Saddam Hussein aides is a further slide into errors of the past. Available from <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE14/002/2007/en>.
- Antonovsky, A. (1979). *Health, stress and coping*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Anwar, D. (2009, July 24). Kurdish politicians accused of exploiting Saddam victims. Retrieved from <http://iwpr.net/report-news/kurdish-politicians-accused-exploiting-saddam-victims>.
- Asadi, A. (2007). *Der Kurdistan-Irak-Konflikt. Der Weg zur Autonomie seit dem Ersten Weltkrieg*. Berlin: Hans Schiler.

- Askari, L. (2012). *Recollecting and neglecting. Trauma and memory in Iraqi Kurdistan*. Unpublished Masters thesis at the Department of Archeology & Anthropology, Newnham College, University of Cambridge.
- Assmann, A. (1999). *Erinnerungsräume. Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses*. Munich: C.H. Beck.
- Assman, A. (2002). Vier Formen der Erinnerung. *Forum Ethik und Streitkultur*, 13, 183-190.
- Assmann, J. (1992). *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis. Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen*. Munich: C. H. Beck.
- Aziz, M. R. (2005). *Enfal-u rehende sosiyolocîyekan* [Anfal and sociological methods]. Sulaimania: Tishk.
- Bajalan, C. (2008). *Accountability and justice in Iraq post Saddam's era: The revised »De-Baathification« law*. Available from <http://kurdishcongress.org/data/upimages/subfolders/PDF/bajalan-2008-accountability-and-justice-in-iraq-post-saddams-era.pdf>.
- Baker, J. A. & Hamilton L. H. (2006). *The Iraq study group report*. Available from [http://www.usip.org/isg/iraq\\_study\\_group\\_report/report/1206/index.html](http://www.usip.org/isg/iraq_study_group_report/report/1206/index.html).
- Bakhewan, H. (1999). *Hawraname bo meju-I Kurdistan-u Kurd* [Hawre's letter on the history of Kurdistan and the Kurds]. Sulaimania: Sardam & Run.
- Bar-On, D. (1995). *Fear and hope: Life stories of five Israeli families of Holocaust survivors, three generations in a family*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bar-On, D. (2004). *Die Last des Schweigens. Gespräche mit Kindern von NS-Tätern*. Hamburg: Edition Körber.
- Bar-On, D. & Chaitin, J. (2001). *Parenthood and the Holocaust*. Jerusalem: Yad Vashem.
- Barth, F. (1954). Father's brother's daughter marriage in Kurdistan. *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology*, 10, 164-171.
- Barth, F. (1958). *Principles of social organization in southern Kurdistan*. Oslo: Jørgensen.

- BBC news. Baghdad Terror Blast Kills Dozens. (2003, October 27). Retrieved from [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/3216539.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/3216539.stm).
- Becker, D. & Calderon, H. (1992). Extremtraumatisierungen - soziale Reparationsprozesse - politische Krise. In H. Riquelme (Ed.), *Zeitlandschaft im Nebel*. Frankfurt am Main: Vervuert.
- Becker, D. (1992). *Ohne Haß keine Versöhnung. Das Trauma der Verfolgten*. Freiburg: Kore Verlag.
- Becker, D. (1995). The deficiency of the concept of post-traumatic stress disorder when dealing with victims of human rights violations. In R.J. Kleber, C.R. Figley & P.R. Gersons (Eds.), *Beyond trauma. Cultural and societal dynamics* (pp. 99-110). New York: Plenum Press.
- Becker, D. (1997). Prüfstempel PTSD - Einwände gegen das herrschende »Trauma-Konzept«. In medico international (Ed.), *Schnelle Eingreiftruppe »Seele«*. Texte für eine kritische »Trauma-Arbeit«. Frankfurt am Main: medico international, 25-47.
- Becker, D. (2007). *Die Erfindung des Traumas. Verflochtene Geschichten*. Berlin: Freitag Mediengesellschaft.
- Begikhani, N., Gill, A., Hague, G., & Ibraheem, K. (2010). *Honour-based killing in Iraqi Kurdistan and in the Kurdish diaspora in UK*. Bristol: Centre for Gender and Violence Research, University of Bristol, University of Roehampton in partnership with Kurdish Women's Rights Watch.
- Bergmann, M. S., Jucovy, M. E., & Kestenber, J. (Eds.) (1995). *Kinder der Opfer - Kinder der Täter*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer.
- Beristain, C. M. (2006). Geschichten in Händen. Zeugenbericht von der Begleitung der Opfer schwerer Menschenrechtsverletzungen in Lateinamerika. *Zeitschrift für Politische Psychologie*, 14(1,2), 33-48.
- Berliner, D. (2005). The abuses of memory: Reflections on the memory boom in Anthropology. *Anthropological Quarterly*, 78(1), 197-211.

- Bettelheim, B. (1943). Individual and mass behavior in extreme situations. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 38, 417-452.
- Birck, A. (2002). *Traumatisierte Flüchtlinge. Wie glaubhaft sind ihre Aussagen?* Heidelberg: Asanger.
- Bloomfield, D. (2006). On good terms. Clarifying reconciliation. *Berghof Report* No. 14. Berlin: Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management.
- Boia, E. jr. (1997). Timangane - über die psychische Heilung ehemaliger Kindersoldaten. In medico international (Ed.), *Schnelle Eingreiftruppe »Seele« - auf dem Weg in die therapeutische Weltgesellschaft. Texte für eine kritische »Trauma-Arbeit«*. Frankfurt am Main: medico international.
- Bohleber, W. (1996). The children of the perpetrators - the after-effects of National Socialism on the following generations (pp. 39-52). In C. Berens (Ed.), *»Coming home« from trauma: The next generation, muteness, and the search for a voice*. Hamburg: Hamburger Institut für Sozialforschung.
- Bonanno, G. A. (2004). Loss, trauma and human resilience. *American Psychologist*, 1, 20-28.
- Boss, P. (2006). *Loss, trauma and resilience. Therapeutic work with ambiguous loss*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co.
- Bourdieu, P. et al. (1999). *The weight of the world. Social suffering and impoverishment in contemporary society*. (P. Parkhurst Ferguson, Trans). Stanford, California: Stanford University Press. (Originally published 1993).
- Bourdieu, P. (1999). To the reader (pp. 6-22). In P. Bourdieu et al. (Eds.), *The weight of the world. Social suffering in contemporary society*. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (2000). Die biographische Illusion: In Hoerning, E. M. (Ed.), *Die biographische Sozialisation. Der Mensch als soziales und personales Wesen*. Vol. 17, Stuttgart: Lucius & Lucius, 51-60.
- Bowlby, John (1980). *Loss, sadness and depression. Attachment and loss* (Vol. 3). London: Hogarth Press.

- Brandl, Y. (2007). Einmal bitte Öl wechseln und die Schaltung reparieren. Sprache und metaphorische Wahrnehmungen zur kindlichen Verhaltensbeschreibung (pp. 107-122). In B. Ahrbeck (Ed.), *Hyperaktivität. Kulturtheorie, Pädagogik, Therapie*. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer.
- Breuer, J., & Freud, S. (1991). *Studien über Hysterie*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer. (Originally published 1895).
- Bundesweite Arbeitsgemeinschaft der psychosozialen Zentren für Flüchtlinge und Folteropfer (Ed.) (2006). *Begutachtung traumatisierter Flüchtlinge: Eine kritische Reflexion der Praxis*. Karlsruhe: von Loeper.
- Caruth, C. (Ed.) (1995). *Trauma: Explorations in memory*. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press.
- Caruth, C. (1996). *Unclaimed experiences. Trauma, narrative and history*. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press.
- Chaliand, G. (Ed.) (1978). *Les Kurdes et le Kurdistan. La question nationale kurde au Proche-Orient*. Paris: Maspero.
- Coalition Provisional Authority (2003, May 16). De-Baathification of Iraqi Society (Order No. 1: CPA/ORD/16 May 2003/01). Retrieved 21 January 2012 from [http://www.iraqcoalition.org/regulations/20030516\\_CPAORD\\_1\\_DeBa\\_athification\\_of\\_Iraqi\\_Society\\_.pdf](http://www.iraqcoalition.org/regulations/20030516_CPAORD_1_DeBa_athification_of_Iraqi_Society_.pdf).
- Coalition Provisional Authority (2003, May 23) Dissolution of Entities (Order No. 2: CPA/ORD/23 May 2003/02). Retrieved 21 January 2012 from [http://www.iraqcoalition.org/regulations/20030823\\_CPAORD\\_2\\_Dissolution\\_of\\_Entities\\_with\\_Annex\\_A.pdf](http://www.iraqcoalition.org/regulations/20030823_CPAORD_2_Dissolution_of_Entities_with_Annex_A.pdf).
- Coalition Provisional Authority (2003, May 25). Management of Property and Assets of the Iraqi Baath Party (Order No. 4: CPA/ORD/25 May 2003/04). Retrieved 21 January 2012, from [http://www.iraqcoalition.org/regulations/20030525\\_CPAORD\\_4\\_Management\\_of\\_Property\\_and\\_Assets\\_of\\_the\\_Iraqi\\_Ba\\_ath\\_Party.pdf](http://www.iraqcoalition.org/regulations/20030525_CPAORD_4_Management_of_Property_and_Assets_of_the_Iraqi_Ba_ath_Party.pdf).
- Coalition Provisional Authority. (2003, May 25). Establishment of the Iraqi De-Baathification Council (Order No. 5: CPA/ORD/25 May 2003/05). Retrieved 21 January 2012 from <http://www.casi.org.uk/info/cpa/030525-CPA-Order-5.pdf>.

- Coalition Provisional Authority. (2003, December 10). Delegation of authority regarding an Iraqi special tribunal (Order Nr. 48: CPA/ORD/10 December 2003/48). Retrieved 3 February 2012 from [http://www.loc.gov/law/help/hussein/docs/20031210\\_CPAORD\\_48\\_IST\\_and\\_Appendix\\_A.pdf](http://www.loc.gov/law/help/hussein/docs/20031210_CPAORD_48_IST_and_Appendix_A.pdf).
- Conference of the Iraqi Opposition. (2010). Final report on the transition to democracy in Iraq. In *State-society relations in Ba'hist Iraq: Facing dictatorship*. London: Routledge. (Originally published 2002). Available from [http://www.wadinet.de/news/dokus/transition\\_to\\_democracy.pdf](http://www.wadinet.de/news/dokus/transition_to_democracy.pdf).
- Connerton, P. (1989). *How societies remember*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Cook, H. (1995). *The safe haven in northern Iraq*. London: Human Rights Centre, University of Essex.
- Daloye, D. (2008). Anfal of Males. PTSD effect on the women left behind 18 years on (pp. 158-177). In *International Conference on Genocide against the Kurdish People*. Erbil 26-28 January 2008. Erbil: Arras Press.
- Das, V. (2008). Violence, gender and subjectivity. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 37, 283-299.
- Das, V., Kleinman, A., Lock, M. & Reynolds, P. (Eds.) (2001). *Remaking a world. Violence, social suffering and recovery*. Berkeley & Los Angeles, California: University of California Press.
- De Torrente, N. (2004). Humanitarian actions under attack. Reflections on the Iraq War. *Harvard Human Rights Journal*, 17, 1-29.
- Die Zeit (2009). Soldaten-Traumata. Afghanistan im Kopf. (February 2). Available from <http://www.zeit.de/online/2009/06/afghanistan-bundeswehrsoldat-trauma>.
- Diner, D. (1996). *Zivilisationsbruch. Denken nach Auschwitz*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer.
- Dizeyi, Y. (2001). *Anfal. Karasat, encam-u rehendakani* [Anfal. Catastrophe, results and methods]. Erbil: Ministry of Education.

- Efrati, N. (2012). *Women in Iraq. Past meets present*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Eisenstadt, M. (2010). Iraq after the Surge (pp. 211-224). In A. Baram, A. Rohde & R. Zeidel (Eds.), *Iraq between occupations. Perspectives from 1920 to the present*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Eissler, K. R. (1963). Den Tod wievieler seiner Kinder muss ein Mensch symptomfrei ertragen können, um eine normale Konstitution zu haben. *Psyche*, 17 (5), 241-291.
- Erdheim, M. (1982). *Die gesellschaftliche Produktion von Unbewußtheit. Eine Einführung in den ethnopsychanalytischen Prozeß*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- Fahl, R. & Markard, M. (1993). Das Projekt »Analyse psychologischer Praxis« oder: Der Versuch der Verbindung von Praxisforschung und Psychologiekritik. *Forum Kritische Psychologie*, 32, 4-35.
- Faraj Rahim, R. (2005). *Xetenekirdin-î - kiçan* [Circumcision of girls]. Sulaimania: Rewan - Women's Media and Education Center.
- Faraj Rahim, R. & Shwan, H. (2004). *Statistics on violence used against women*. Sulaimania: Rewan Women's Media and Education Center.
- Farouk-Sluglett, M. (1993). Liberation or repression? Pan-Arab nationalism and the women's movement in Iraq (pp. 51-73). In D. Hopwood et al. (Eds.), *Iraq, power and society*. Reading: Ithaca Press (St. Antony's Middle East monographs).
- Farouk-Sluglett, M. & Sluglett, P. (1987). *Iraq since 1958. From revolution to dictatorship*. London & New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Fawcett, J. & Tanner V. (2002). *The internally displaced people of Iraq*. Paper of the Brookings Institutions - SAIS project of internal displacement. Washington DC: Brookings Institution. Available from <http://www.brookings.edu/fp/projects/IDP/articles/iraqreport.pdf>.
- Felman, Sh. & Laub, D. (1992). *Testimony: Crises of witnessing in literature, psychoanalysis and history*. London: Routledge.

- Ferenczi, S. (1955). Confusion of tongues between adults and the child (pp. 156-167). In *Final contributions*. London: Hogarth. (Originally published 1933).
- Fischer, G. & Riedesser, P. (2009). *Lehrbuch der Psycho-traumatologie* (4th edn.). Munich: Reinhard.
- Fischer, M. (2011). Transitional Justice and Reconciliation: Theory and Practice (pp. 406-430). In B. Austin, M. Fischer, H. J. Giessmann (Eds.), *Advancing Conflict Transformation: The Berghof Handbook 2*. Framington Hills: Barbara Budrich Publishers.
- Fischer-Tahir, A. (1996). *Landrechtliche Probleme in Irakisch Kurdistan. Untersuchungen in der Region Qaradagh*. Unpublished internal report for medico international.
- Fischer-Tahir, A. (2000). Nationalismus und Frauenbewegung in Irakisch-Kurdistan (pp. 157-178). In E. Savelsberg et al. (Eds.), *Kurdische Frauen und das Bild der kurdischen Frau*. Münster: LIT Verlag.
- Fischer-Tahir, A. (2003). *Wir gaben viele Märtyrer. Widerstand und kollektive Identitätsbildung in Irakisch-Kurdistan*. Münster: Unrast.
- Fischer-Tahir, A. (2009). *Brave men, pretty women? Gender and symbolic violence in Iraqi Kurdish urban society*. Berlin: Europäisches Zentrum für Kurdische Studien.
- Fischer-Tahir, A. (2012). Searching for sense: The concept of genocide as part of the knowledge production in Iraqi Kurdistan. In J. Tejel, P. Sluglett, R. Bocco & H. Bozarslan (Eds.), *Writing the modern history of Iraq. Historiographical and political challenges*. London: World Scientific Publishing.
- Fischer-Tahir, A. (2013). Science-based truth as news: knowledge production and media in Iraqi Kurdistan. *Kurdish Studies* 1(1) (2013): 28-43
- Flick, U. (2000). *Qualitative Forschung. Theorie, Methoden, Anwendung in Psychologie und Sozialwissenschaften* (5th edn.). Reinbek: Rowohlt.

- Flick, U. (2007). *Triangulation. Eine Einführung (Qualitative Sozialforschung)*. Heidelberg: Springer VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.
- Frankl, V. (1982). *Und trotzdem ja zum Leben sagen. Ein Psychologe erlebt das Konzentrationslager*. Munich: dtv.
- Freud, S. (1975). *Zur Ätiologie der Hysterie. Studienausgabe* (6th vol.). Frankfurt am Main: Fischer. (Originally published 1896).
- Freud, S. (1917). Trauer und Melancholie. *Internationale Zeitschrift für Ärztliche Psychoanalyse*, 6, 288-301.
- Freud, S. (1930). *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur*. Vienna: Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag.
- Freud, S. (1999). *Der Mann Moses und die monotheistische Religion*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer. (Originally published 1939).
- Freud, S. (1955). *Moses and monotheism*. London: Vintage. (Originally published 1939).
- Glaser, B. G. & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory. Strategies for qualitative research*. Piscataway NJ: Aldine Transaction.
- Global Justice Centre. (2008). Q & A on the Iraq High Tribunal and the Global Justice Center's gender justice monitoring, August 2008. Available from [http://www.pbs.org/weta/crossroads/incl/trial\\_IHT\\_gender\\_issues.pdf](http://www.pbs.org/weta/crossroads/incl/trial_IHT_gender_issues.pdf).
- Gosden, C. M., Gardener, D., Amitay, M. (2001). Effects of genotoxic weapons of mass destruction on civilian populations. *Disarmament Forum*. United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research Geneva.
- Groninger, K. (2006). Flüchtlinge und Traumabearbeitung im Spannungsfeld ausländerrechtlicher Weisung und psychotherapeutischer Hilfe. *TRN-Newsletter*, special issue 2006. Hamburg: Hamburg Institute for Social Research. Retrieved from <http://traumaresearch.his-online.de/special2006/groninger.htm>.
- Grubrich-Simitis, I. (1979). Extremtraumatisierung als kumulatives Trauma. Psychoanalytische Studien über seelische Nachwirkungen der Konzentrationslagerhaft

- bei Überlebenden und ihren Kindern. *Psyche*, 33(11), 991-1023.
- Gull, M. O. (2002). A stage of practising genocide. *Anfal* (Issued by the Ministry of Human Rights, Refugees and Anfal), 2, 42-54.
- Halbwachs, M. (1980). *The Collective Memory*. New York: Harper & Row Colophon Books. (Originally published 1950).
- Hamber, B. (2009). *Transforming societies after political violence. Truth, reconciliation and mental health*. New York: Springer.
- Hamber, B. & Kelly, G. (2004). *A working definition of reconciliation*. Available from <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/dd/papers/dd04recondef.pdf>.
- Hamber, B. & Wilson, R. A. (2002). Symbolic closure through memory, reparation and revenge in post-conflict societies. *Journal of Human Rights*, 1(1), 35-53.
- Hardi, A. (n. d.). Commentary on Halabja 2006. *Kurdish aspect*. Retrieved from <http://www.kurdishaspect.com/commentaryonhalabja.html>.
- Hardi, C. (2011). *Gendered experiences of violence. Anfal survivors in Kurdistan-Iraq*. Farnham: Ashgate.
- Haukari e.V. (2006). *Anfal* [Documentary film]. Kurdistan-Iraq, Germany: SMIDAK Fimproduktion & Haukari e.V.
- Herman, J. L. (1992). *Trauma and recovery: The aftermath of violence from domestic abuse to political terror*. New York: Basic Books.
- Hilberg, R. (1985). *The Destruction of the European Jews*. New York: Holmes & Meier. (Originally published 1963).
- Hiltermann, J. (2007). *A poisonous affair. America, Iraq, and the gassing of Halabja*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Hiltermann, J. (2010). Playing with fire in Iraq. Retrieved 1 February 2012 from <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/middle-east-north-africa/iraq-iran-gulf/iraq/playing-with-fire-in-iraq.aspx>.

- Hirsch, M. (2000). Schuld und Schuldgefühl. In W. Mertens & B. Waldvogel (Eds.), *Handbuch psychoanalytischer Grundbegriffe*. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer Verlag.
- Holzkamp, K. (1985). *Grundlegung der Psychologie*. Frankfurt am Main: Campus.
- Horowitz, M. J. (1976). *Stress response syndromes* (1st ed.). Northvale, NJ: Aronson.
- Human Rights Watch (1993). *Genocide in Iraq. The Anfal campaign against the Kurds*. New York: Human Rights Watch.
- Human Rights Watch (1994). *Bureaucracy of repression. The Iraqi government in its own words*. New York: Human Rights Watch.
- Human Rights Watch (2003a). The Iraqi government's assault on the Marsh Arabs. Available from: <http://www.hrw.org/legacy/backgrounders/mena/marsharabs1.htm>.
- Human Rights Watch (2003b). The mass graves of Al-Mahawil. The truth uncovered. Available from <http://www.hrw.org/node/12322/section/2>.
- Human Rights Watch (2003c). Iraq: Justice needs international role. Retrieved from hrw.org website: <http://www.hrw.org/news/2003/07/14/iraq-justice-needs-international-role>.
- Human Rights Watch (2004). *Iraq. State of evidence*. New York: Human Rights Watch.
- Human Rights Watch (2006). Iraq: Dujail trial fundamentally flawed. Available from <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2006/11/19/judging-dujail-0>.
- Human Rights Watch (2010). *They took me and told me nothing. Female genital mutilation in Iraqi Kurdistan*. New York: Human Rights Watch.
- Human Rights Watch (2011). Law Banning FGM a positive step. Bill shows commitment to end violence against women. *HRW News* (2011, July 26). Available from <http://www.hrw.org/news/2011/07/25/iraqi-kurdistan-law-banning-fgm-positive-step>.

- Human Rights Watch & Physician for Human Rights (1993). *The Anfal campaign in Iraqi Kurdistan: The destruction of Koreme*. New York: Human Rights Watch.
- Ibrahim, F. (1997). *Konfessionalismus und Politik in der arabischen Welt. Die Schiiten im Irak*. Münster: LIT Verlag.
- Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada. (2004). *Iraq: Reports of violence and acts of revenge by the general population against the officials and their families of Saddam Hussein's regime following Hussein's fall*. Available from <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/403dd1fb4.html>.
- Independent Kurdistan Journalism News (2012). New wave of Kurdish genocide victims return to Kurdistan: »From mass-graves to mass-graves«. (2012, December 13). Retrieved from ikjnews.com website: <http://ikjnews.com/?p=5866>.
- International Federation for Human Rights & Human Rights Alliance France (2001). *Iraq: An intolerable, forgotten and unpunished repression*. Declaration from the 63rd meeting on 18 April 2001. Geneva: United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.
- International Center for Transitional Justice (2006a). *Dujail: Trial and error*. Available from <http://ictj.org/sites/default/files/ICTJ-Iraq-Dujail-Trial-English-2006.pdf>.
- International Center for Transitional Justice (2006b). *The Anfal trial and the Iraqi high tribunal*. Update number three: The defence phase and closing stages of the Anfal trial. Available from <http://ictj.org/sites/default/files/ICTJ-Iraq-Anfal-Tribunal-2006-English2.pdf>.
- International Center for Transitional Justice (2007). *The Anfal Trial and the Iraqi High Tribunal*. Update number two: The prosecution witness and documentary evidence phases of the Anfal trial. Available from [http://ictj.org/sites/default/files/ICTJ-Iraq-Anfal-Tribunal-2007-English\\_0.pdf](http://ictj.org/sites/default/files/ICTJ-Iraq-Anfal-Tribunal-2007-English_0.pdf).
- International Center for Transitional Justice (2008). *Iraq's new »accountability and justice« law*. Retrieved from <http://ictj.org/publication/briefing-paper-iraqs-new-accountability-and-justice-law>.

- International Center for Transitional Justice (2009). *The Anfal trial and the Iraqi high tribunal. Update number one: The complainant phase of the Anfal trial*. Available from <http://ictj.org/sites/default/files/ICTJ-Iraq-Tribunal-Anfal-2009-English.pdf>.
- International Center for Transitional Justice & the Human Rights Center, University of Berkeley (2004). *Iraqi Voices. Attitudes Towards Transitional Justice and Social Reconstruction*. Available from [http://www.law.berkeley.edu/HRCweb/pdfs/Iraqi\\_voices.pdf](http://www.law.berkeley.edu/HRCweb/pdfs/Iraqi_voices.pdf).
- International Crisis Group (2003). *Governing Iraq* (Middle East Report No. 17). Available from <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/middle-east-north-africa/iraq-iran-gulf/iraq/017-governing-iraq.aspx>.
- International Crisis Group (2004). *Iraq's transition: On a knife edge* (Middle East Report No. 27). Available from <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/middle-east-north-africa/iraq-iran-gulf/iraq/027-iraqs-transition-on-a-knife-edge.aspx>.
- International Crisis Group (2006). *Iraq and the Kurds: The brewing battle of Kirkuk* (Middle East Report No. 56). Available from <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/middle-east-north-africa/iraq-iran-gulf/iraq/056-iraq-and-the-kurds-the-brewing-battle-over-kirkuk.aspx>.
- International Crisis Group (2008a). *Iraq's civil war, the Sadrists and the Surge* (Middle East Report No. 72). Available from <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/middle-east-north-africa/iraq-iran-gulf/iraq/072-iraqs-civil-war-the-sadrists-and-the-surge.aspx>.
- International Crisis Group (2008b). *Iraq after the Surge 2. The need for a new political strategy* (Middle East Report No. 75). Available from <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/middle-east-north-africa/iraq-iran-gulf/iraq/075-iraq-after-the-surge-II-the-need-for-a-new-political-strategy.aspx>.
- International Crisis Group (2009). *Iraq and the Kurds: Trouble along the trigger line* (Middle East Report No. 88). Available from <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/re>

- gions/middle-east-north-africa/iraq-iran-gulf/iraq/088-iraq-and-the-kurds-trouble-along-the-trigger-line.aspx.
- Iraqi Constitution (final draft). Available from [http://www.uniraq.org/documents/iraqi\\_constitution.pdf](http://www.uniraq.org/documents/iraqi_constitution.pdf) (last accessed 1 April 2013).
- Janet, P. (1894). *Der Geisteszustand der Hysterischen*. Vienna: F. Deuticke.
- Janoff-Bulman, R. (1992). *Shattered Assumptions: Towards a New Psychology of Trauma*. New York: Free Press.
- Joseph, S. (1991). Elite strategies for state building. Women, family, religion and the state in Iraq and Lebanon (pp. 176-200). In D. Kandiyoti (Ed.), *Women, Islam and the state*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Karrer, C. (1998). *Sie haben unsere Männer verschleppt. Frauen und Krieg in Irakisch-Kurdistan*. Wettingen: eFeF.
- Katzman, K. (2009). *Iraq: post-Saddam governance and security*. Washington DC: Congressional Research Service.
- Katzman, K. & Blanchard, C. (2005). *Iraq: Oil for food program, illicit trade and investigations*. (Congressual research service report #RL30472). Retrieved from <https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=470002>.
- Keilson, H. (1979). *Sequentielle Traumatisierung bei Kindern: Deskriptiv-klinische und quantifizierend-statistische follow-up Untersuchung zum Schicksal der jüdischen Kriegswaisen in den Niederlanden*. Stuttgart: Enke.
- Kelly, M. J. (2007). The Anfal trial against Saddam Hussein. *Journal of Genocide Research*, 9(2), 235-242.
- Kelly, M. J. (2010). The Kurdish regional constitution within the framework of the Iraqi Federal Constitution: A struggle for sovereignty, oil, ethnic identity, and the prospects for a reverse supremacy clause. *Penn State Law Review*, 114(3), 707-808.
- Keen, D. (1993). *The Kurds in Iraq. How safe is their haven now?* London: Save the Children.
- Keupp, H. & Zaumseil, M. (Eds.) (1978). *Die gesellschaftliche Organisierung des psychischen Leids*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

- Khoury, D. R. (2012). The 1991 Intifada in three keys (pp. 245-268). In J. Tejel, P. Sluglett, R. Bocco & H. Bozarslan (Eds.), *Writing the modern history of Iraq. Historiographical and political challenges*. London: World Scientific Publishing.
- King, D. E. (2008). The Personal is Patrilineal: Namus as Sovereignty. *Identities. Global Studies in Culture and Power*, 15(3), 317-342.
- Kleinman, A., Das, V. & Lock, M. (1997). *Social suffering*. Berkeley: California University Press.
- Klüger, R. (1994). *Weiterleben. Eine Jugend*. Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag.
- Kogan, I. (1996). Similarities and differences between the second generation of victims and perpetrators (pp. 68-72). In C. Berens (Ed.), *Coming home from trauma: The next generation, muteness, and the search for a voice*. Hamburg: Hamburger Institut für Sozialforschung.
- Kogan, I. (1998). *Der stumme Schrei der Kinder. Die zweite Generation der Holocaust-Opfer*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer.
- Kogan, I. (2011). *Mit der Trauer kämpfen. Schmerz und Trauer in der Psychotherapie traumatisierter Menschen*. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta.
- Kordon, D. R., Edelman, L. J., Lagos, D. M., Nicoletti, E. & Bozzolo, R. C. (1988). *Psychological effects of political repression*. Buenos Aires: Sudamericana/Planeta.
- Kordon, D. R. (1991). Supplement. Impunity's psychological effects: Its ethical consequences. *Journal of medical ethics*, 17, 29-32.
- KurdishMedia.com (2003). Top secret Iraqi document reveals Kurdish girls sent to harems and nightclubs in Egypt. (2003, July 2). Retrieved from <http://www.kwahk.org/articles.asp?id=19>.
- Kurdish Women Action Against Honour Killing (2003). Kurdish girls were detained by Baath, sold and then sent to their »new owners« in Egypt (2003, July 25). An open letter to the United Nations, the Coalition Provisional

- Authority, Britain's special envoy to Iraq and the Iraqi Governing Council. Retrieved 5 April 2011. Available from <http://www.kwahk.org/articles.asp?id=36>.
- Kurdistan Regional Government (1992). Constitution of the Iraqi Kurdistan region. Retrieved from [http://old.krg.org/docs/K\\_Const.asp](http://old.krg.org/docs/K_Const.asp).
- Kübler-Ross, E. (1969). *On death and dying*. New York: Macmillan.
- Kühner, A. (2008). *Trauma und kollektives Gedächtnis*. Gießen: Psychosozial.
- LaCapra, D. (2001). *Writing history, writing trauma*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Lagos, D., Kordon, D., Edelman, L., & Kersner, D. (1994). Argentina: Our experience in rehabilitation work with relatives of desaparecidos and other victims of political repression. Buenos Aires: Work Paper EATIP (Signatory BZFO/art/1994 00 235). Retrieved from Library of the Berlin Treatment Center for Torture Victims.
- Laplanche, J. & Pontalis, J. B. (1999). *Das Vokabular der Psychoanalyse*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- Laub, D. (1992). Bearing witness, or the vicissitudes of listening (pp. 57-64). In S. Felman, & D. Laub (Eds.), *Testimony: crises of witnessing in literature, psychoanalysis and history*. London: Routledge.
- Leezenberg, M. (1999). Violence and modernity: the Baath's ambiguous heritage in Iraqi Kurdistan. In Awadani e.V. (Ed.), *Irakisch-Kurdistan. Status und Perspektiven*. Ergebnisse einer internationalen Tagung 1999 in Berlin. Berlin: Awadani e.V.
- Lennertz, I. (2006). Trauma-Modelle in Psychoanalyse und Klinischer Psychologie. In *texte. psychoanalyse. ästhetik. kulturkritik.*, 26(3), 77-106.
- Leontiev, A. N. (1978). *Activity, consciousness and personality*. New York: Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs.
- Leontiev, A. N. (1981). *Problems of the development of the mind*. Moscow: Progress.
- Levi, P. (1995). *Survival in Auschwitz*. New York: Touchstone. (Originally published 1947).

- Levi, P. (1995). *Die Untergegangenen und die Geretteten*. Munich: Hanser. (Originally published 1986).
- Lorenzer, A. (1966). Zum Begriff der »Traumatischen Neurose«. *Psyche*, 20(7).
- Lorenzer, A. (1970). *Sprachzerstörung und Rekonstruktion. Vorarbeiten zu einer Metatheorie der Psychoanalyse*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- Los Angeles Times. A homecoming of great sorrow for the Kurds. (2008, January 18). Retrieved from <http://articles.latimes.com/2008/jan/18/world/fg-anfal18>.
- Maass, P. (10 January 2011). The Toppling. How the media inflated a minor moment in a long war. *The New Yorker*. Retrieved from [http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2011/01/10/110110fa\\_fact\\_maass](http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2011/01/10/110110fa_fact_maass).
- Makiya, K. (1992, May). The Anfal: Uncovering an Iraqi campaign to exterminate the Kurds. *Harper's*, pp. 53-61.
- Makiya, K. (1993). *Cruelty and silence. War, tyranny, uprising and the Arab world*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co.
- Mannheim, K. (1964). Das Problem der Generationen (pp. 509-565). In K. H. Wolff (Ed.), *Wissenssoziologie. Auswahl aus dem Werk*. Berlin: Luchterhand.
- Markard, M. (2000). Critical psychology: Methodology from the standpoint of the subject. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 1(2). Available from <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/1088/2381>.
- Martín-Baró, I. (1990). *Psicología social de la guerra: trauma y terapia*. San Salvador: UCA editores.
- Mayring, P. (2000). *Qualitative Inhaltsanalyse. Grundlagen und Techniken* (7th edn.). Weinheim: Deutscher Studien Verlag.
- McDowall, D. (2004). *A modern history of the Kurds*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- McKelvey, T. (14 May 2007). Interventionism's last hold-out. *The American's Prospect*. Retrieved from <http://prospect.org/article/interventionisms-last-hold-out>.
- medico international. (1990). Deportations in Iraqi Kurdistan and Kurdish refugees in Iran (pp. 59-77). In *Yearbook*

- of the Kurdish Academy 1990. Ratingen: The Kurdish Academy.
- medico international (Ed.) (1997). *Schnelle Eingreiftruppe »Seele«*. Texte für eine kritische »Trauma-Arbeit«. Frankfurt am Main: medico international.
- medico international (Ed.) (2005). *Im Inneren der Globalisierung. Psychosoziale Arbeit in Gewaltkontexten*. Frankfurt am Main: medico international.
- Mehmud, A. K. (2002-2004). *Rashabayjer-u Anfal* [Poisonous storm and Anfal] (Vols. 1-3). Erbil & Sulaimaniya: Ministry of Culture.
- Merk, U., Schleicher, R. & Robins, S. (1998). *Der Preis der Versöhnung. Südafrikas Auseinandersetzung mit der Wahrheitskommission*. Frankfurt am Main: medico international.
- Merk, U. (2006). *Jenseits der Wahrheitskommission - auf der Suche nach Formen der Bewältigung von Gewalterfahrungen in Südafrika*. *Zeitschrift für Politische Psychologie*, 14(1, 2), 49-64.
- Merk, U. (2010). *Respekt, Würde, Ubuntu - gemeindeorientierte systemische Traumaarbeit in Südafrika* (pp. 78-93). In M. Budzinski (Ed.), *Traumatherapie und gesellschaftliches Umfeld*. Bad Boll: Evangelische Akademie.
- Merk, U. (11 May 2012). *Psychosoziale Hilfe. Professionalisierung als Empathievermeidung*. Lecture presented at Symposium der Stiftung medico international Frankfurt am Main. Available from <http://www.medico.de/themen/aktion/konferenzen/dokumente/psychosoziale-hilfe-/4309/>.
- Meyer, J. E. (1981). *Über das Trauern um Vermißte. Eine Befragung von Ehefrauen, Kindern und Geschwistern*. *Archiv für Psychiatrie und Nervenkrankheiten*, 230, 91-101.
- Meyer, J. E. (1994): *Trauerreaktionen*. In *Psychiatrie heute. Aspekte und Perspektiven. Festschrift zum 60. Geburtstag von Reinhard Toelle*. Munich: Urban und Schwarzenberg.

- Middleton, D. & Edwards, D. (1990). *Collective remembering*. London: Sage Publications.
- Mirvic-Rogge, S. (2005, June). *Frauen aus Bosnien – Frauen in Bosnien*. Lecture presented at the Heinrich Böll Stiftung, Berlin, Germany. Available from <http://www.muslimische-stimmen.de/uploads/media/Srebrenica.pdf>.
- Mitscherlich, M. & Mitscherlich, A. (1967). *Die Unfähigkeit zu trauern. Grundlagen kollektiven Verhaltens*. Munich: Piper.
- Mlodoch, K. (2000). *Mit Anfal ist auch unser Leben verschwunden. Zur psychosozialen Situation Anfal überlebender Frauen in Germyan, Kurdistan-Irak*. (Unpublished diploma dissertation). Institute of Psychology at the Free University Berlin.
- Mlodoch, K. (2003). Irak. Lange Schatten der Vergangenheit. *Amnesty International Journal*. Available from <http://www.amnesty.de/umleitung/2003/deu05/118?lang=de%26mimetype%3dtext%2fhtml>.
- Mlodoch, K. (2006, September). *Iraq: The situation of Anfal women in Germian area and key experiences of the Counselling Center for Victims of Political Violence in Tuz Khurmatu*. Paper presented at the 3rd International Trauma Research Net Conference: Trauma – Stigma and Distinction. Social Ambivalences in the Face of Extreme Suffering. St. Moritz, Switzerland.
- Mlodoch, K. (2011). Anfal überlebende Frauen in Kurdistan-Irak – Trauma, Erinnerung und Bewältigung. *Zeitschrift für Psychotraumatologie, Psychotherapiewissenschaft, Psychologische Medizin (ZPPM)*, 3, 33-45.
- Mlodoch, K. (2012a). »We want to be remembered as strong women, not as shepherds«: Women Anfal survivors in Kurdistan-Iraq struggling for agency and acknowledgement. *Journal of Middle Eastern Women's Studies*, 8(1), 63-91.
- Mlodoch, K. (2012b). Fragmented memory, competing narratives: the perspective of women survivors of the Anfal operations in Kurdistan (pp. 205-26). In J. Tejel, P. Sluglett, R. Bocco & H. Bozarslan (Eds.), *Writing the*

- modern history of Iraq. Historiographical and political challenges.* London: World Scientific Publishing.
- Mohammed, G. M. (2009). *Karîgerîyea bûrîyekan-î prosekan-î cînosayd-î gel-î kurd le Germiyan-da, qeza-î Kelar wek nimûne* [The economic effects of the process of genocide of the Kurdish people in Germiyan. The example of the district of Kalar]. Erbil: Salahuddin University.
- Morris, H. (2002). Inter-Kurdish conflict in Iraq – reasons and effects. In Awadani e.V. (Ed.), *Irakisch-Kurdistan. Status und Perspektiven.* Ergebnisse einer internationalen Tagung 1999 in Berlin. Berlin: Awadani e.V.
- Mourners gather at a hilltop cemetery as 365 coffins arrive bearing the remains of those killed in Hussein's genocidal 1988 campaign. *Al Iraqi.* Available from aliraqi.org website: <http://www.aliraqi.org/forums/showthread.php?t=82566>.
- Mujawajo, E. & Belhaddad, S. (2007). *Ein Leben mehr. Wie ich der Hölle Ruandas entkam* (2nd edn.). Berlin: Ullstein.
- Mundt, A., Wünsche, P., Heinz, A., & Pross, C. (2012). Trauma therapy in crisis and disaster areas – a critical review of standardized interventions such as Narrative Exposure Therapy. *Psychiatrische Praxis*, 38(6), 300-305.
- Mupinda, M. (1995). *Loss and grief among the Shona: The meaning of disappearances.* Paper presented at 7th International Symposium on »Torture as a challenge to the medical profession«, Cape Town, South Africa. Available at the archive of the Center for the Treatment of Torture Victims, Berlin.
- Mustafa, A. N. (1997). *La kenari Danubawa bo khari Nawzang* [From the Danube shore to the Nawzang valley]. Kurdistan: Zargata.
- Mustafa A. N. (1999). *Xulanewe nawbazine-da. Diwe-i nawewe-i rudawekani Kurdistani Iraq. 1984-1988* [Going around in circles. The inside story of events in Iraqi Kurdistan 1984-1988]. Berlin: Awadani.
- Muttitt, G. (2011). *Fuel on the fire. Oil and politics in occupied Iraq.* London: Bodley Head.

- Natali, D. (2010). *The Kurdish Quasi-state. Development and dependency in Post Gulf War Iraq*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.
- Nelson, K. (2006). Über Erinnerung reden. Ein soziokultureller Zugang zur Entwicklung des autobiographischen Gedächtnisses (pp. 78-95). In H. Welzer & H. Markowitsch (Eds.), *Warum Menschen sich erinnern können. Fortschritte in der interdisziplinären Gedächtnisforschung*. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta.
- Neuner, F. (2008). Stabilisierung vor Konfrontation in der Traumatherapie - Grundregel oder Mythos? *Verhaltenstherapie*, 18, 109-118.
- Newsweek (2008). Saddam's Unrepentant Judge (2008, January 1). Retrieved from <http://www.thedailybeast.com/newsweek/2008/01/28/saddam-s-unrepentant-judge.html>.
- Niederland, W. G. (1968). The problem of the survivor: The psychiatric evaluations of emotional problems in survivors of Nazi persecution (pp. 8-22). In H. Krystal (Ed.), *Massive psychic trauma*. New York: International University Press.
- Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Baghdad & Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Geneva (2003, July 10). *First Iraqi National Human Rights Workshop: Expert consultation on international principles to support justice for past human rights violations in Iraq. 30 June and 1 July 2003* [Meeting minutes]. Retrieved from <http://www.un.org/apps/news/infocus/iraq/infocusnews.asp?NewsID=546&sID=12>.
- Ofteringer, R. (1999a). *Al'Anfal - schrankenlose staatliche Gewalt und ihre Legitimierung durch Verweise auf das islamische Kriegsrecht im Irak der 80er Jahre*. Unpublished Master dissertation at the Institute of Islamic Sciences Free University Berlin.
- Ofteringer, R. (1999b). Die Baath-Partei und die Kurden. In Awadani e.V. (Ed.), *Irakisch-Kurdistan. Status und Perspektiven. Ergebnisse einer internationalen Tagung 1999 in Berlin*. Berlin: Awadani e.V.

- Oppenheim, H. (1889). *Die traumatischen Neurosen. Nach den in der Nervenlinik der Charité in den letzten 5 Jahren gesammelten Beobachtungen*. Berlin: Hirschwald.
- Ottaway, M. & Kaysi, D. (2010). *De-Baathification as a political tool: Commission ruling bans political parties and leaders*. Retrieved 21 January 2012, from <http://carnegieendowment.org/2010/01/26/de-baathification-as-political-tool-commission-ruling-bans-political-parties-and-leaders/7mt>.
- Ottomeyer, K. (1992). *Prinzip Neugier. Einführung in eine andere Sozialpsychologie*. Heidelberg: Asanger.
- Ottomeyer, K. (2006). Gutachtenverwehrlosung in österreichischen Asylverfahren (pp. 13-44). In K. Ottomeyer & W. Renner (Eds.), *Interkulturelle Traumadiagnostik*. Klagenfurt: Drava.
- Ottomeyer, K. (2011). *Die Behandlung der Opfer. Über unseren Umgang mit dem Trauma der Flüchtlinge und Verfolgten*. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta.
- Ottomeyer, K. & Peltzer, K. (2002). *Überleben am Abgrund. Psychotrauma und Menschenrechte*. Klagenfurt: Drava.
- Parin, P., Parin-Matthèy, G., & Morgenthaler, F. (1963). *Die Weißen denken zuviel. Psychoanalytische Untersuchungen bei den Dogon in Westafrika*. Zurich: Atlantis.
- Parin, P., Parin-Matthèy, G., & Morgenthaler, F. (1971). *Fürchte Deinen Nächsten wie Dich selbst. Psychoanalyse und Gesellschaft am Modell der Agni in Westafrika*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Peltzer, K., Abdilyawad, A. & Bittenbinder, E. (1995). *Gewalt und Trauma*. Berlin: IKO-Verlag für Interkulturelle Kommunikation.
- Pire, S. A. (1999). Die aktuelle Wirtschaftslage in Irakisch-Kurdistan und die Effekte der internationalen Unterstützung infolge der UNO-Resolution 986. In Awadani e.V. (Ed.), *Irakisch-Kurdistan, Status und Perspektiven*. Berlin: Awadani.

- Pottek, M. (2011). Bericht Kurdistan-Reise 9. bis 11. Juni 2011. Unpublished project report, HAUKARI e.V.
- Power, S. (2003). *A problem from hell. America and the age of genocide*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Preitler, B. (2006). *Ohne jede Spur. Psychosoziale Arbeit mit Angehörigen verschwundener Personen*. Gießen: Psychosozial-Verlag.
- Pross, C. (2009). *Verletzte Helfer. Umgang mit dem Trauma. Risiken und Möglichkeiten sich zu schützen*. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta.
- Qani'a, B. (1979). *Bincina komalietakani afreti la de' neshini kurdawari*. Bagdad: Irshad.
- Qaradaghi, M. (1995). *Le Penawi jianawei afreta* [To revive women]. Stockholm: Nawroz.
- Qaradaghi, M. (2010). *A Year in Hell. Memoir*. Erbil: Government of the Kurdish Region, Ministry of Culture.
- Quirk, G. J. & Casco, L. (1994). Stress disorders of families of the disappeared: A controlled study in Honduras. *Social Sciences and Medicine*, 39(2), 1675-1679.
- Qurbany, A. (2002-2007). *Shayethalakani Anfal*. The Witnesses of Anfal (Vols. 1-4). Sulaimania: Asa.
- Rafailović, K. (2005). *Problemfeld Begutachtung traumatisierter Flüchtlinge. Eine empirische Studie zur Praxisreflexion*. Schkeuditz: Schkeuditzer Buchverlag/GNN.
- Randal, J. C. (1998). *After such knowledge. What forgiveness? My encounters with Kurdistan*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press.
- Rando, T. A. (1984). *Grief, dying and death. Clinical interventions for caregivers*. Illinois: Research Press.
- Reddemann L., & Sachsse, U. (1997). Traumazentrierte Psychotherapie 1: Stabilisierung. Persönlichkeitsstörungen. *PTT*, 1(3), 113-147.
- Reddemann, L. (2001). *Imagination als heilsame Kraft. Zur Behandlung von Traumafolgen mit ressourcenorientierten Verfahren*. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta.
- Reemtsma, J. P. (1996). Historische Traumen. *Mittelweg*, 2, 8-12.

- Reemtsma, J. P. (2002). Das Recht des Opfers auf die Bestrafung des Täters (pp. 47-84). In J. P. Reemtsma (Ed.), *Die Gewalt spricht nicht*. Stuttgart: Reclam.
- Reuters (2003). Iraq: Bombs on Red Cross and Police Kill 33 in Baghdad. (2003, November 10). Retrieved 27 January 2012 from <http://reliefweb.int/node/136574>.
- Reuters (2004). Investigators unearth clues to convict Saddam. (2004 October 12). Retrieved from <http://old.krg.org/docs/articles/reuters-mass-grave-found-hatra-oct04.a>.
- Roberts, G. & Williams, J. (directors). (2006). *Saddam's road to hell* [Documentary film]. United Kingdom: RW films.
- Rogg, I. (2006, December 30). Der Galgen steht. *Taz*. Retrieved from <http://www.taz.de/1/archiv/print-archiv/printressorts/digi-artikel/?ressort=sw&dig=2006%2F12%2F30%2Fa0073&cHash=d3814918c806668b25ed4beaf3dd49e0>.
- Rogg, I. (2007, January 2). Der Tod, mit dem Handy gefilmt. *Taz*. Retrieved from <http://www.taz.de/1/archiv/archiv/?dig=2007/01/02/a0134>.
- Rogg, I. (2010, October 15). Undurchsichtiges Spiel vor den Wahlen. Hunderte von Kandidaten ausgeschlossen. *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*. Retrieved from <http://www.nzz.ch/aktuell/startseite/undurchsichtiges-spiel-vor-der-wahl-im-irak-1.4965845>.
- Rogg, I. (2011, October 13). Anschläge auf irakische Polizei [Attacks on Iraqi police]. *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*.
- Rogg, I. (2011, October 15). Anschläge in Sadr City [Attacks in Sadr City]. *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*.
- Rogg, I. (2011, December 20). Der Irak will US-Soldaten [Iraq wants US soldiers]. *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*.
- Rohde, A. (2010). Understanding Baathist Iraq? Towards a comparative historiography of dictatorships. In A. Bar-am, A. Rohde, & R. Zeidel (Eds.), *Iraq between occupations. Perspectives from 1920 to the present*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Savage, T. (2007). When pursuing justice means denying victims' right to truth. *Human Security Journal*, 4, 106-109.

- Schauer, M., Neuner, F., & Elbert, T. (2005). *Narrative Exposure Therapy (NET). A short-term intervention for traumatic stress disorders* (2nd ed.). Göttingen: Hogrefe & Huber Publishers.
- Schauer, E. (2008). *Trauma treatment for children in war. Build-up of an evidence-based large-scale mental health intervention in North Eastern Sri Lanka*. (Doctoral dissertation, Universität Konstanz 2008). Available from <http://www.ub.uni-konstanz.de/kops/volltexte/2008/5424>.
- Schmolze, B. (2009). Im Namen der Menschheit. Die Entwicklungen der internationalen Tribunale in Fällen schwerer Menschenrechtsverletzungen. *Forum Wissenschaft*, 9.
- Schmolze, B. & Rauchfuss, K. (Eds.) (2009). *Kein Vergeben. Kein Vergessen. Der internationale Kampf gegen Straflosigkeit*. Berlin: Assoziation a.
- Schriefers, S. (2008). *Trauma und Bewältigungsmöglichkeiten. Eine subjektwissenschaftliche Untersuchung zu Ressourcen in Flüchtlingsbiographien*. Saarbrücken: VDM Dr. Müller.
- Serkani, K. (2009). *Anfal le yadewari peshmergayek-da* [Anfal in a Peshmerga's memory]. Sulaimania: Genc.
- Shekhani, A. (2009, December 1). *Spatial design and social control: Collective towns in Iraqi Kurdistan* [Interview by Recchia, F., & Wachtmeister, A.]. ArteEast. Retrieved from <http://www.arteeast.org/pages/artenews/extra-territoriality/255/>.
- Sissons, M., & Bassin, A. S. (2007). Was the Dujail trial fair? *Journal of International Criminal Justice* 5, 272-286.
- Sissons, M. (2008). *Briefing paper: Iraq's new »accountability and justice« law*. New York: International Center for Transitional Justice.
- Spiegel Online (2009). Afghanistan-Einsatz. Zahl deutscher Soldaten mit Trauma steigt dramatisch. (February 3), Retrieved from <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/afghanistan-einsatz-zahl-deutscher-soldaten-mit-trauma-steigt-dramatisch-a-605186.html>.

- Sponeck, H. (2005). *Ein anderer Krieg. Das Sanktionsregime der UNO im Irak*. Hamburg: Hamburger Edition.
- Stichting Nederland-Koerdistan (Netherlands Kurdistan Society). (1996). *Iraqi Kurdistan 1991-1996. Political crisis and humanitarian aid*. Amsterdam: Stichting Nederland-Koerdistan.
- Stover, E., Megally, H., & Mufti, H. (2005). Bremer's »Gordian Knot«: Transitional justice and the US occupation in Iraq. *Human Rights Quarterly*, 27, 830-857.
- Strauss, A. L. & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. London: Sage.
- Suarez-Orozco, M. (1991). The heritage of enduring a »dirty war«: Psychosocial aspects of terror in Argentina. *The Journal of Psychohistory*, 18(4), 469-505.
- Summerfield, D. (1997). Das Hilfsbusiness mit dem »Trauma«. In medico international (Ed.), *Schnelle Eingreiftruppe »Seele«*. Texte für eine kritische »Trauma-Arbeit«. Frankfurt am Main: medico international.
- Summerfield, D. (2001). The invention of post-traumatic stress disorder and the social usefulness of a psychiatric category. *British Medical Journal*, 322(7278), 95-98.
- The Kurdish Globe (2010). Kurds rebury massacred children. (2010, April 17). Available from <http://www.kurdishglobe.net/displayPrintableArticle.jsp?id=191546FFD4045E80185609D4AB458C0E>.
- The Kurdish Globe (2012). 730 Anfal victims laid to rest in Suleimaniah. (2012, June 3). Available from kurdishglobe.net website: <http://www.kurdishglobe.net/display-article.html?id=8A354B2AE068AD82699A86D7D2F682BA>.
- Tully, S. R. (1995). A painful purgatory: Grief and the Nicaraguan mothers of the disappeared. *Social Sciences and Medicine*, 40(12), 1597-1610.
- United Nations Children's Fund & Ministry of Health, Iraq. (1999). *Child and maternal mortality survey 1999*. New York: UNICEF.
- United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) (2005). *Gender profile of the conflict in Iraq*. Available

- from [http://www2582.sslsdomain.com/uniraq/documents/iraq\\_pfv.pdf](http://www2582.sslsdomain.com/uniraq/documents/iraq_pfv.pdf).
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2008). UNHCR's Guterres calls for more support to Iraqi refugees. (2008, February 14). Retrieved from <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/txis/vtx/news/opendoc.htm?tbl=NEWS&id=47b46c3f2>.
- United Nations Security Council (1990, August 6). Resolution No. 661. Available from <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/575/11/IMG/NR057511.pdf?OpenElement>.
- United Nations Security Council (1991, April 5). Resolution No. 688. Available from <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/596/24/IMG/NR059624.pdf?OpenElement>.
- United Nations Security Council (1995, April 14). Resolution No. 986. Available from <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N95/109/88/PDF/N9510988.pdf?OpenElement>.
- United Nations Security Council (1998, February 20). Resolution No. 1153. Available from <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N98/039/34/PDF/N9803934.pdf?OpenElement>.
- United Nations Security Council Resolution (2002, November 8). Resolution No. 1441. Available at: <http://www.un.org/depts/unmovic/new/documents/resolutions/s-res-1441.pdf>.
- United Nations Security Council (2003, May 22). Resolution No. 1483 Available at: <http://www.uncc.ch/resolution/res1483.pdf>
- van Bruinessen, M. (1989). *Agha, Sheikh und Staat. Politik und Gesellschaft Kurdistans*. Berlin: Edition Parabolis.
- van Bruinessen, M. (1994). Genocide of Kurds (pp. 165-191). In I. W. Charney (Ed.), *The widening circle of genocide* (Vol. 3). New Brunswick, NY: Transaction Publishers.
- van der Kolk, B.A. (1989). The compulsion to repeat the trauma. Re-enactment, revictimization and masochism. *Psychiatric Clinics of Northern America*, 12(2), 389-411.

- van der Kolk, B. (1994). The body keeps the score: Memory and the evolving psychobiology of posttraumatic stress. *Harvard Review of Psychiatry*, 1(5), 253-265.
- van der Kolk, B. (2000). Posttraumatic stress disorder and the nature of trauma. *Dialogues in Clinical Neuroscience*, 2(1), 7-22.
- van der Kolk, B. (2006). Clinical implications of neuroscience research in PTSD. *Annals of the New York Academy of Science*, 1071, 277-293.
- van der Stoel, M. (1994). *Human rights questions: Human rights situations and reports of special rapporteurs and representatives*. Retrieved from <http://www.unhchr.ch/Huridocda/Huridoca.nsf/TestFrame/4ca4ae2431b4edb880256708005c71fa>.
- Vanly, I. C. (1986). *Kurdistan und die Kurden, Vol. 2: Türkei und Irak - Fortsetzung*. Göttingen: pogrom-Reihe bedrohte Völker.
- Vanly, I. C. (2002). The forgotten Faili Kurds of Iraq (pp. 43-48). In M. M.A. Ahmed & M. M. Gunther (Eds.), *Kurdish exodus. From internal displacement to diaspora*. Sharon Mass: Ahmed Foundation.
- Venzlaff, U., Dulz, B., & Sachsse, U. (2004). Zur Geschichte der Psychotraumatologie. In U. Sachsse, *Traumazentrierte Psychotherapie*. Stuttgart: Schattauer.
- Visser, R. (2010). *A responsible end? The United States and the Iraqi transition 2005-2010*. Charlottesville, Virginia: Just World Publishing.
- Volkan, V. (2006, September 22-25). *The next chapter: consequences of societal trauma. Memory, narrative and forgiveness: Reflecting on ten years of South Africa's truth and reconciliation commission and celebrating archbishop Desmond Tutu's life of peaceful justice*. Lecture conducted from University of Cape Town.
- Vygotsky, L.S. (1962). *Thought and language*. Cambridge MA: MIT Press.
- Vygotsky, L.S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

- WADI e.V. – Association for Crisis Assistance and Development Co-Operation. (2010). *Female genital mutilation in Iraqi-Kurdistan. An empiric study by WADI*. Frankfurt am Main: WADI e.V.
- Weine, S. M. & Chae, S. R. (2008, September 9-11). *Trauma, disputed knowledge and storying resilience*. Paper presented at the Trauma, Development and Peacebuilding Conference. Available from <http://www.incore.ulst.ac.uk/pdfs/IDRCweine.pdf>.
- Welzer, H. (2001). *Das soziale Gedächtnis. Geschichte, Erinnerung, Tradierung*. Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, HIS-Verlag.
- Wenk, S. & Eschebach, I. (2002). Soziales Gedächtnis und Geschlechterdifferenz. Eine Einführung. In Eschebach, I., Jacobeit, S. & Wenk, S. (Eds.), *Gedächtnis und Geschlecht. Deutungsmuster in Darstellungen des nationalsozialistischen Genozids*. Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag.
- Wiesel, E. (1978, April 16). Trivializing the Holocaust: Semifact and semi-fiction. *The New York Times*, sec. 2, p. 1.
- Wimmer A. (2003). Democracy and ethno-religious conflict in Iraq. *Survival: The International Institute for Strategic Studies Quarterly*, 4, 111-134.
- Windt, K. (2006, January). Das Trauma als Narrativ und kulturelles Deutungsmuster. *Trauma Research Net Newsletter*. Hamburg Institute for Social Research. Available from [http://traumaresearch.his-online.de/special2006/windt.htm#\\_edn1](http://traumaresearch.his-online.de/special2006/windt.htm#_edn1).
- Winter, B. (2002). *Kurdistan-Irak – Untergehen im Sicheren Hafen. Studie über die Folgen einer humanitären Intervention*. Frankfurt am Main: VAS.
- Winter, B. (2003). Bilanz des Grauens. Ein weiteres Kapitel des Missbrauches der Medizin. Retrieved 2012, November 11 from <http://www.haukari.de/aktuell/archiv.htm>
- Winter, B. (2008). Vergesst Anfal nicht. *Analyse & Kritik*, 530(3).

- Witzel, A. (2000). Das problemzentrierte Interview. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung*, 1(1), Art. 22. Retrieved from <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs0001228>.
- Women for Women International (2005). *Windows of Opportunity. The Pursuit of Gender Equality in Post-War Iraq*. Washington DC: Women for Women.
- Wong, E. (2006, August 22). Prosecutors detail atrocities in Hussein's trial. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/08/22/world/middleeast/22iraq.html?pagewanted=print&r=0>.
- World Health Organization (1992). *International statistical classification of diseases and related health problems*. Available from <http://apps.who.int/classifications/icd10/browse/2010/en>.
- Yaphe, J. S. (2004). Turbulent transition in Iraq. Can it succeed? *Strategic Forum*, 208.
- Žbanić, J. (Director). (2005). *Esmas Geheimnis - Grbavica* [Motion picture]. Austria, Bosnia- Herzegowina, Germany, Croatia: Ventura Film & medica mondiale.
- Zentrum Moderner Orient. (2008). *ZMO-Bulletin* No. 14 [Bulletin]. Available from [http://www.zmo.de/wirueberuns/material/Bulletin\\_Nr\\_14.pdf](http://www.zmo.de/wirueberuns/material/Bulletin_Nr_14.pdf).
- Zhang, Y. & Wildemuth, B. M. (2009). Qualitative analysis of content (pp.308-319). In B. M. Wildemuth (Ed.), *Applications of social research methods to questions in information and Library Science*. Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited.
- Zvzidic, S. & Butollo, W. (2000). War-related loss of one's father and persistent depressive reaction in early adolescents. *European Psychologist*, 5, 204-214.

## List of interviews and meetings

### Interviews conducted for previous research in 1996 and 1999

**Interviews with women** in resettlement projects 1996 (work protocols, 1996)

**Protocols of social workers** in the rural rehabilitation project in Bnari Gil/Dawde, funded by NPA 1997/1998 (Bnari Gil/Dawde work protocols)

**Amira**, 3 September 1999 (Amira, 1999)

**Fatma**, Rezan & Seyvan, 19 September 1999 (Bakery, 1999)

**Rezan** (2nd interview), 20 September 1999 (Rezan, 1999)

**Runak**, 3 October 1999, (Runak, 1999)

**Suhaila**, 15 September 1999 (Suhaila, 1999)

**Shirin**, 14 September 1999 (Shirin, 1999)

AZADI-TV 1999, (Azadi, 1999)

**Nazanin** – daughter of woman in bakery project, September 1999, (Nazanin, 1999)

### Interviews audiotaped in the context of the HAUKARI Testimony Documentation Project 2002-2004

**Faima** (Faima, 2002)

**Payman** (Payman, 2002)

**Rabea** (Rabea, 2002)

**Roshna**, February 2004 (Roshna, 2004)

**Gulnaz Aziz Qadir** – July 2002 (Gulnaz, 2002)

### Interviews conducted between 2008 and 2012

**Amira**, 13 October 2010 (Amira, 2010)

**Habsa**

– May 2009 (Habsa, 2009)

– 10 July 2010 (Habsa, 2010)

– 20 July 2011 (Habsa, 2011)

**Faima**, 30 July 2011 (Faima, 2011)

**Kafia**, 30 July 2010 (Kafia, 2010)

**Payman**, July 2010 (Payman, 2010)

**Rabea**, 14 April 2012 (Rabea, 2012)

**Hataw**

– 14 October 2010 (Hataw, 2010)

– 10 April 2012 (Hataw, 2012)

**Suhaila**

– May 2009 (Suhaila, 2009)

– 15 October 2010 (Suhaila, 2010)

– July 2011 (Suhaila, 2011)

**Khadija**, July 2010 (Khadija, 2010)

**Salima**, July 2010 (Salima, 2010)

**Gulistan** – Suhaila’s daughter, July 2012 (Gulistan, 2010)

**Halala**– Habsa’s daughter, July 2011 (Halala, 2011)

**Akhtar**, 13 October 2010 (Akhtar, 2010)

**Najiba**, 13 October 2010 (Najiba, 2010)

**Nasrin**, July 2011 (Nasrin, 2011)

**Naila**, April 2012 (Naila, 2012)

**Djamil**, July 2010 (Djamil, 2010)

**Mam Khalil**, 14 October 2010 (Khalil, 2010)

**Haji Ibrahim**, 13 October 2010 (Ibrahim, 2010)

### **Meetings and events referred to specifically in the thesis (in chronological order)**

- 17 April 2008: Protocol of public meeting with Anfal women, organized by HAUKARI Germany at the Heinrich Böll Foundation, Berlin
- April 2009: Interviews and observations at the reburial ceremony of 187 Anfal victims in Rizgary
- April 2009: Protocol of workshop with women Anfal survivors, organized by HAUKARI Germany, at the Zentrum Moderner Orient
- April 2009: Travel delegation of women Anfal survivors to Germany
- 14 April 2010: Interviews and conversations with Anfal women at the Anfal Remembrance Ceremony
- April 2010: Discussions with Anfal women, Kurdish artists and German consultant on the memorial design

- April 2010: Trips to Germany with Kurdish artists; meeting with Anfal women in Rizgari
- October 2010: Meeting with Anfal women, Kurdish artists and German consultant in Rizgari
- April 2011: Interviews and observations at the Anfal memorial project exhibition in Rizgari
- April 2011: Third International Conference on Mass Graves, Erbil
- June 2011: Protocol Martina Pottek; meeting with Anfal women to discuss the statue models
- 1-3 October 2011: Trip with Anfal women to the Anfal memorial project exhibition in Erbil
- October 5, 2011; Meeting with Anfal women for evaluating the trip to Erbil
- April 15, 2012: Interviews and conversation protocols with Anfal women at the Anfal Remembrance Ceremony, Rizgari
- October 2012: Travel delegation of women Anfal survivors from the Anfal women Memorial Forum Project to Germany

### **Photo credits**

All photos are taken from the Anfal Women Memorial Forum Project in Rizgari. Copyright: HAUKARI e.V. None of the photos published in this book portraits the women interviewed within the research.

# Index

## Key research persons

**Akhtar** 201, 409, 410, 426, 427, 475, 478

**Amira** 171, 186-189, 227, 228, 229, 244, 263, 264, 265, 273, 274, 287, 299, 300, 301, 314-317, 319, 346, 366, 402, 403, 406, 411, 412, 422, 423, 436, 437, 464, 482

**Djamil** 196, 197, 198, 444

**Faima** 171, 191, 192, 223-227, 230, 231, 237, 248, 254, 272, 285, 315-317, 333, 346, 347, 403, 406, 411, 412, 422, 423, 424, 425, 438-441, 446, 448, 449, 450, 464, 465, 482

**Fatma** 198, 199, 213, 214, 262, 265, 291, 294, 300, 302, 303

**Gulala Germyani** 204, 205  
*see: Gulnaz Aziz Qadir*

**Gulistan** 181, 201, 202, 210, 320, 407, 411, 416

**Gulnaz Aziz Qadir** 7, 204, 296, 366, 471

**Habsa** 183-186, 201, 203, 217, 238, 245, 246, 248, 254, 272, 288, 295, 296, 313, 314, 317, 319, 320, 322, 334, 340, 345, 399, 401, 402, 406, 411, 414, 422, 424, 425, 427-436, 448, 449, 455, 457, 460, 464, 470, 473, 476, 482

**Haji Ibrahim** 202, 203, 204, 289, 460, 478

**Halala** 201, 202, 340, 411

**Hataw** 194, 195, 233-235, 272, 278, 288, 317, 340, 354, 357, 359, 361, 362, 366, 376, 404, 406, 411, 422, 423, 433-435, 436, 452, 457, 482

**Husnia** 282

**Kafia** 201, 216, 242, 271, 286, 308, 398, 408, 409, 410, 423, 424, 426

**Khadija** 196, 197, 229, 230, 365, 375, 425, 441-446, 449, 450, 468

**Mahsum** 213, 214, 271, 286, 298, 308, 331

**Mam Khalil** 202, 203, 204, 284, 460

**Mam Pola** 7, 9, 148, 204

**Naila** 200, 234, 235, 365, 376, 406, 422, 423, 425

**Najiba** 409, 410, 426, 478

**Nazanin** 275, 277

**Payman** 189, 190, 217-223, 227, 236, 238, 243, 254, 272, 312, 313, 317, 321, 348, 399, 404, 406, 407, 414, 424, 441-446, 449, 450, 464, 482

**Rabea** 193, 238, 249-252, 254, 272, 288, 317, 318, 321, 333, 340, 403, 404, 406, 411, 422, 423, 424, 446-448, 464, 482

**Rezan** 198, 199, 244, 262, 276-278, 280, 291, 293, 297, 298, 311, 312, 317, 319

**Roshna** 201, 353, 354, 411, 530

**Runak** 198, 199, 214, 215, 216, 262, 265, 272, 277, 287, 288, 292, 293, 295, 298, 317, 322

**Salima** 196, 197, 198, 232, 235, 240, 242, 244, 398, 422, 424

**Shirin** 198, 200, 280, 281, 282, 288, 293

**Suhaila** 166, 179, 180-183, 185, 190, 195, 201, 209, 214-216, 238, 239, 242, 248, 254, 261-263, 272, 278-280, 282, 288, 294, 299, 301, 302, 308, 311, 313, 316, 317, 320-322, 333, 334, 339, 344, 357, 359-361, 362, 366, 380, 397, 402, 405-407, 411, 414-417, 421, 424, 427-436, 438, 441, 448, 449, 452-455, 457, 460, 464, 473, 476, 479, 482

## Concepts and methods

**activity theory** 41

**agency** 13, 24, 26, 41, 138, 151, 155, 156, 157, 332, 412, 456, 459, 460, 487, 491, 492, 495, 498

- American Psychiatric Association** 35
- ambiguous loss** (Boss) 50, 256
- Améry, Jean** 47
- anger** 49, 60, 189, 190, 197, 220, 229, 276, 312, 330, 346, 397, 399, 441, 442, 443, 445, 446, 457, 458
- Alexander, Jeffrey** 57
- Assmann, Aleida** 51, 55
- Assmann, Jan** 51
- Bar-On, Dan** 35, 38, 55
- Becker, David** 23, 34, 38, 39, 46, 255, 258, 259, 261, 316, 319
- Bettelheim, Bruno** 23, 34
- Boss, Pauline** 24, 256
- Bourdieu, Pierre** 51, 155, 156
- Bowlby, John** 49
- breaking the silence** 209
- break of civilization** (Diner) 34
- Breuer, Joseph** 33, 52
- Caruth, Cathy** 31, 53
- chosen trauma** (Volkan) 55, 56, 386
- collective trauma** 29, 54-58, 242, 493
- collectively communicated trauma 57
- symbol-mediated trauma 57
- communicative validation** 154
- community psychology** 24
- complex traumatization** 39
- Connerton, Paul** 51
- Critical Psychology** 24, 41, 151, 152, 156
- cultural trauma** 57, 492
- Das, Veena** 31, 46, 58
- Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-DSM III** 35
- Eissler, Kurt R.** 36
- empowerment** 24, 145, 147, 393, 428, 484, 491
- Erdheim, Mario** 56
- extreme situation** (Bettelheim) 23, 34
- extreme traumatization** 39
- Ferenczi, Sándor** 44, 45
- fidelity to trauma** 459, 491
- Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies** 160
- Freud, Sigmund** 33, 50, 52, 56
- grief** 18, 24, 27, 49, 50, 66, 150, 165, 191, 210, 231, 235, 240, 241, 257, 258, 259, 298, 299, 301, 308, 323, 324, 326, 328, 329, 330, 331, 346, 408, 423, 424, 425, 446, 460, 464, 467, 473, 475, 476
- abnormal 37, 50
- complicated 50, 326
- pathological 50
- prolonged 204, 241, 301, 326
- traumatic 50
- unresolvable 261, 475
- Grounded Theory** 152, 157
- Halbwachs, Maurice** 51
- Hamber, Brandon** 38, 42, 49, 60, 61, 62, 64, 65, 66, 255, 258, 260, 465, 487, 493
- healing** 19, 60, 62, 65, 260, 363, 496
- Herman, Judith Lewis** 23, 32, 33, 34, 38, 39, 43, 46, 48, 53, 209, 211, 257, 326, 486
- Holzkamp, Klaus** 24, 41, 151
- International Classification of Diseases Manual of the World Health Organization-ICD 10** 35
- International Conflict Research Institute (INCORE)** 66
- International Trauma Research Net** 39
- introjection of the aggressor** (Ferenczi) 45
- Janet, Pierre** 33, 52
- Janoff-Bulmann, Ronnie** 47
- Keilson, Hans** 34, 38, 42, 319,
- Kleinman, Arthur** 31, 58
- Klüger, Ruth** 53, 388
- Kogan, Ilany** 35, 50, 55
- Kordon, Diana** 24, 38, 40, 60, 255, 259, 266, 309
- Kübler-Ross, Elisabeth** 49

- Kühner**, Angela 25, 57, 493
- LaCapra**, Dominick 25, 35, 55, 459
- Laub**, Dori 38, 39, 48, 158, 160, 161, 208, 486
- Leontiev**, Aleksei N. 41
- Levi**, Primo 46, 59, 388
- Lorenzer**, Alfred 30, 162
- Mannheim**, Karl 55
- Martín-Baró**, Ignacio 23, 39
- Mayring**, Philipp A.E. 19, 151, 153, 154, 157
- memory**  
 as social category 51  
 collective 25, 29, 51, 237, 240, 242  
 communicative 51  
 conversational remembering 51  
 cultural 51  
 generational 55  
 habitual 51  
 memory studies 50  
 memory symbols (Freud) 52  
 memory talk 51  
 mystifications of traumatic memory 53  
 narrative 41, 158  
 social 51  
 traumatic 52, 53, 158
- Mitscherlich**, Alexander 56
- Mitscherlich**, Margarete 56
- mourning** 18, 49, 50, 60, 79, 143, 179, 208, 259, 260, 284, 299, 300, 306, 324, 326, 328, 384, 385  
 ceremonies 299, 300  
 rituals 259, 465  
 symbols 208
- Morgenthaler**, Fritz 56
- Narrative Exposure Therapy** (NET) 40, 41, 495
- Niederland**, William G. 45
- nostalgia** 414, 446, 447, 448
- Oppenheim**, Hermann 33
- Ottomeyer**, Klaus 31, 32, 40, 41, 46, 52, 59, 150, 162, 210, 211, 315, 324, 388
- Parin-Matthèy**, Goldy 56
- Parin**, Paul 56
- perpetrator introjects** (Ferenczi) 45
- political traumatization** 38, 39
- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder** (PTSD) 22, 23, 35, 36, 37, 38, 45, 423
- problem-centred interviews** (Witzel) 156, 157
- psychodrama** 162
- psycho-social trauma** (Martín-Baró) 38, 39
- qualitative content analysis** (Mayring) 19, 151, 152, 153
- Rando**, Theresa 49
- reconciliation** 16, 25, 29, 60-66, 368-380, 493  
 democratization 61, 133, 156  
 forgiveness 63, 66  
 peace vs. justice 64  
 post-conflict peace-building 60  
 post-conflict transformation 60  
 truth vs. justice 64
- Reddemann**, Luise 24, 42, 43, 44, 150, 209, 315
- Reemtsma**, Jan Philipp 49, 53
- resilience** 41, 42, 43, 319, 432, 492, 498
- resources** 19, 24, 26, 42, 43, 311, 315-324, 331, 393, 415, 418, 425, 427, 445, 456, 483, 488, 489, 492, 495, 496, 497
- salutogenesis** (Antonovsky) 42
- scenic understanding** (Lorenzer) 162
- seduction theory** (Freud) 33
- sense of coherence**  
 comprehensibility 42, 384  
 manageability 43, 319  
 meaningfulness 43
- sequential traumatization** (Keilson) 34
- social other** 47, 48, 50, 59, 158, 159
- social suffering** 31, 58

**socio-political traumatization**

**processes** (Becker) 38, 39

**speaking out** 209

**subject-centred research** 41, 138, 157

**subject-scientific methodology** 151, 156, 157

**Summerfield, Derek** 38

**survivor guilt syndrome** 45

**survivor's pride** 186, 317, 361, 411, 428, 433, 434, 437, 447, 455, 456, 459, 475, 476, 489, 490, 498

**symbolic closure** 60, 147, 266

**symbolic violence** 155, 156

**the uncanny** 31, 75

**the unspeakable** 31, 48, 53, 209

**transgenerational traumatization** 55

**transitional justice** 18, 22, 26, 60-

66, 115, 116, 348-372, 379, 490  
 accountability 40, 62-66, 116, 348, 363, 368, 493

impunity 21, 60, 62, 64, 114

restorative justice 63

retributive justice 63, 64, 379

**trauma**

agency and resilience 41-42

definition of 32

dialectic of trauma 43-44

history of 33-35

individual symptoms 43-50

inflationary use of 30-31

political and psychosocial  
 concepts 38-40

political brisance of 32-33

PTSD-concept 35-38

neurobiological findings 40-41

**trauma symptoms**

anxiety 35

avoidance 35, 43-44, 52, 59, 388, 486, 491

compulsive repetition 44

deferred action/activation 33, 34

after latency 33, 34, 44

dissociation, dissociated memories  
 33, 44, 52, 160, 209

flashbacks 35, 44, 52, 158, 165, 166, 425

guilt, self-blame 45, 46, 48, 209, 216, 231, 233, 235, 240, 241, 259, 260, 261, 278, 325, 326, 486, 487

intrusion, intrusive images 35, 43, 44, 52, 158, 242, 346, 422, 459, 486, 491

nightmares 35, 44, 52, 158, 423, 425, 496

re-enactment 44, 55, 162, 166, 183, 198, 215, 232, 421, 422, 426, 427

repressed memories, 44, 162, 209, 217, 448, 489

revenge feelings 48, 49, 190, 348, 365, 379

shame 46, 47, 209, 233, 235, 241, 270, 290, 325, 486

shattered assumptions (Janoff-Bul-

man) 47, 235, 238, 325, 486

sleep disorder, insomnia 35, 192, 262, 347, 422, 423, 425, 437, 439

somatic representation, psychoso-  
 matic symptoms 33, 52, 424, 455

**traumatic stressors** 35, 37

**Understanding** (Bourdieu) 155-156

**van der Kolk**, Bessel A. 44, 52

**vicarious traumatization** 54

**Volkan**, Vamik 25, 40, 55, 56, 384

**Vygotsky**, Lew S. 41

**Welzer**, Harald 51

**Witzel**, Andreas 157, 158

**Historical, political and social context**

**abduction of Barzani men** 93, 335, 343, 383, 384

**Abdullah**, Chnar Saad 134, 382

**Abu Ghraib Prison** 120, 200, 234, 368

**Accountability and Justice**

**Commission** 352

**adultery** 271

- Ahmed**, Hero Ibrahim 134, 308, 345  
**al-Amiri**, Abdullah 358  
**al-Daraji**, Mohammed 339, 377  
**Algiers Agreement** (1975) 88  
**al-Islam**, Ansar 119  
**al-Jafari**, Ibrahim 115, 121  
**Allawi**, Ayad 122  
**al-Mahawil** mass grave 335, 341  
**al-Majid**, Ali Hassan 94, 114, 168, 215, 254, 263, 358, 364, 379, 438, 453, 490  
**al-Maliki**, Nouri 123, 124, 125, 363, 369  
**al-Mihrab Martyr Foundation** 344, 371  
**al-Sistani**, Grand Ayatollah 119  
**al-Zarqawi**, Mus'ab 124  
**Amnesty International** 120, 256, 257, 355, 363, 377  
**Anfal Campaign**  
 preparations 94-97  
 poison gas attack against Halabja 97-98  
 first Anfal: Sergalou Bergalou 98  
 second Anfal: Qaradagh 98  
 third Anfal: Qermyan 98, 169-175  
 fourth Anfal: Lower Zab Valley  
 fifth to eight Anfal: Rawanduz, Shaqlawa, Badinan 99  
 Anfal patterns 99  
 amnesty 1988 100-101  
 interpretations 101-103  
 research/publications 20-23, 102-104, 381-384  
**Anfal trial** 195, 357, 358, 359, 363, 364, 365, 379, 451, 453  
**Anfal Women Memorial Forum Project**, Rizgary 19, 26, 150, 182, 185, 205, 393, 433, 469-484, 498  
**as-Sadr**, Muqtada 119  
**as-Salam** Centre Tuz Khurmatu 146, 373-376  
**Association of Free Prisoners** (AFP) 337  
**Assyrian Christians** 108, 370  
**Auschwitz** 34, 46, 47, 59, 160, 161  
**Aziz**, Tariq 94  
**Baath Party** 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 76, 77, 85, 87, 88, 102, 116, 117, 336, 349, 350, 351, 352, 355, 357  
**Baath regime**  
 rise to power 68-69  
 welfare and state supplies 69-70  
 violence and terror 70-72  
 Baathification of society 72-75  
 policy on women 75-78  
 Iran-Iraq war 1980-1988 78-79  
 retaliation against Shia and Marsh Arabs 80  
 contrasting interpretations 80-83  
 decline 113-114  
**Baker-Hamilton paper** 351  
**Barzani**, Massud 89, 108, 128, 176, 344, 346  
**Barzani**, Mulla Mustafa 85, 88, 89  
***bewa-jin-i Enfal*** (Anfal women without men) 143, 208, 419, 425  
**Bremer**, Paul 116, 349  
**Bush**, George Jr. 82, 114  
**Chalabi**, Ahmed 350, 351  
**Chalabi**, Selim 354  
**Chamchamal** 173, 177, 244, 272, 334, 361, 391, 414, 442, 465  
**coalition of the willing** 105, 114  
**Coalition Provisional Authority** (CPA) 16, 116, 117, 118, 121, 126, 337-339, 341, 342, 348, 349, 350, 353-355, 367, 368, 374, 379, 451  
**collaborators** *see also: jash* 238-239, 306, 346, 375, 383, 386, 387, 440  
**collective towns** *see also: mujamma'at* 17, 93, 139 141-144, 168, 169, 173, 174, 177, 178, 179, 243, 305, 317  
**Communist Party of Kurdistan** 108  
**Conference of the Iraqi Opposition** 349

- Constitution of Iraq** (2005) 84, 117, 118, 121, 122, 123, 127, 128, 129, 395, 396, 488
- Constitution of the Kurdistan Region** 108, 128
- death penalty** 355, 364, 365, 366
- de-Baathification** 63, 117, 349-352, 354, 356, 368, 371, 379
- de Mello**, Sergio Vieira 119
- de-Nazification** 63, 11
- Dibs prison** 17, 100, 171, 172, 186, 187, 194, 199, 200, 227, 228, 229, 231, 263, 280, 281, 303, 360, 402, 452
- divorce** 76, 114, 134, 268, 464
- Dujail trial** 356, 357, 358, 363
- Edwar**, Hana'a 123
- Falluja** 120, 370
- Fayli Kurds** 91, 371
- federalism, federal Iraq** 89, 108, 115, 122, 127
- female genital mutilation (FGM)** 134, 135, 176, 270
- forced disappearances**  
 Argentina 40, 62, 255, 258, 259, 266, 309  
 Bosnia 255  
 Chile 39, 62, 255, 437  
 Germany after 1945 255, 257  
 Honduras 255  
 Nicaragua 255, 257  
 South Africa 255, 266  
 Tsunami 255
- General Union of Iraqi Women** 72, 76
- genocide** 20, 21, 39, 61, 63, 94, 102, 103, 207, 260, 309, 338, 347, 352, 354, 357, 358, 362, 364, 374, 376, 382-384, 388, 391, 483
- Germyan region**  
 before Anfal 167-168  
 Anfal in Germyan 169-175  
 after Anfal 175-180
- Germyan and Kwestan** (TV-drama) 461, 463
- Goran** 132, 133, 176, 183, 185, 381, 390, 402, 463
- Halabja** 22, 97, 98, 102, 106, 140, 221, 254, 306, 357, 364, 382, 383, 454, 466, 475, 499
- HAUKARI - Association for International Cooperation** 4, 8, 135, 144, 145, 146, 147, 149, 163, 182, 191, 193, 201, 205, 363, 365, 373, 374, 429, 469, 471
- Heinrich Böll Foundation** 123, 365, 377, 429, 469
- Higher National De-Baathification Council (HNDC)** 350, 351
- High Office for Issues of the North** 94
- Hilberg**, Raul 103
- Holocaust survivors** 23, 34, 36, 38, 45, 48, 55, 158, 438
- honour** 90, 119, 135, 148, 269, 270, 271, 273, 275, 280, 282, 290, 322, 327, 413, 464, 487
- honour and shame** 46, 120, 135, 176, 270, 290
- honour killing** 134, 135, 145, 271, 451
- Human Rights Ministry Iraq** 336, 338, 344, 370
- Human Rights Watch (HRW)** 20, 71, 80, 90, 94, 96, 98, 100, 101, 102, 103, 134, 135, 169, 170, 171, 172, 176, 229, 230, 233, 243, 246, 254, 270, 334, 335, 336, 337, 338, 341, 355, 356, 391
- Hussein**, Qusay 113, 353
- Hussein**, Saddam 15, 49, 68, 71, 73, 74, 76, 77, 78, 80, 82, 88, 91, 93, 94, 97, 101, 102, 105, 107, 111, 113, 114, 115, 116, 127, 145, 146, 178, 182, 190, 195, 201, 234, 244, 246, 247, 251, 254, 262, 263, 333, 334, 340, 342, 343, 348, 349, 350, 352, 353, 354, 356, 357, 358, 361, 363-367, 377-379, 404, 406, 435, 442, 445, 452, 453, 488

- Hussein**, Uday 113, 350, 353  
**ikhlaq** *see*: honour
- international aid policy** 61, 108, 110, 112
- International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ)** 355, 356, 357, 358, 364, 365
- International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP)** 381
- International Criminal Court (ICC)** 63
- International Crisis Group** 118, 124, 129, 351, 369
- Iran-Iraq war** 76, 78, 80, 221, 358
- Iraqi Communist Party** 89, 115, 130, 336
- Iraqi Governing Council (IGC)** 117, 118, 121, 354, 451
- Iraqi High Tribunal (IHT)** 101, 182, 195, 354, 356, 363, 368, 372, 379, 383, 385, 451
- Iraqi Kurdistan National Assembly** 108
- Iraqi Memory Foundation** 338
- Iraqi National Assembly** 368, 376
- Iraqi Special Tribunal** 116, 127, 342, 354, 383
- Iraqi Transitional Government** 117, 121, 342, 348, 367, 368
- Islamic Dawa Party** 105, 115, 123, 124
- Islamic Law** 76, 277
- jash** *see also*: collaborators 96, 99, 169, 170, 184, 194, 197, 217, 225, 238, 244, 245, 253, 271, 323, 399, 444, 449, 450
- Kamel**, Hussein 114
- KHANZAD women's centre** 122, 145, 307
- Kirkuk** 84-86, 89, 91, 92, 106, 107, 122, 123, 129, 139, 146, 167, 168, 170, 173, 189, 214, 218, 219, 221, 223, 227, 244, 253, 264, 275, 287, 308, 334, 340, 369, 373, 374, 395, 396, 397, 402, 416
- KOMALA** 89, 132, 168, 169, 174, 383
- Kurdish exodus (1991)** 106, 139, 181, 187, 191, 193, 194, 248, 249, 253, 254, 257, 301, 313, 330, 386, 403
- Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP)** 85-89, 93, 99, 108, 110, 111, 127, 128, 131, 133, 145, 174, 184, 308, 313, 314, 336, 393, 439, 462
- Kurdistan Front** 100, 107, 108, 253, 254, 390, 449
- Kurdistan Islamic Union** 108
- Kurdistan Regional Parliament** 132, 134, 307, 308, 345, 376, 390, 391, 392
- Kurdistan Socialist Party** 89
- Kurds in Iraq**  
 nation without state 83-84  
 struggle for autonomy 84-89  
 under the Baath regime 86-90  
 expulsion of Fayli Kurds 91  
 displacement and ethnic cleansing 91-93  
 abduction of Barzani men 93  
 1991 - 2003 104-112  
 insurrection 1991 105-106  
 safe havens 106-107  
 Kurdistan Regional Government 107-108  
 internal war 110-111  
 after 2003 127-135  
 political and economic stabilization 127-131  
 civil society and internal opposition 131-133  
 women 133-135
- Mahdi militia** 119
- Makiya**, Kanan 20, 68, 72, 73, 80, 81, 102, 338, 351
- marriage**  
 arranged 199, 265  
 forced 76, 135, 200  
 levirate 269, 277,  
 traditional contracts 76, 176, 186, 265, 273, 274, 280

- jin-be-jin* (woman for woman) 186, 188, 269, 273
- jin-be-xwên* (woman for blood) 270
- gawre be picuk* (old for young) 186, 268, 270, 280
- gawre-kic* (unmarried woman) 268
- shirbay* (bride price) 186, 270
- remarriage of Anfal women 199, 200, 203, 268, 273, 275, 276, 277-284, 301, 307-309, 317, 327, 329, 464, 487
- mass graves** 12, 15-17, 23, 93, 99, 146, 173, 185, 254, 333-335, 339-344, 347, 358, 370-372, 378, 382, 384, 402, 417, 422, 427, 456, 458, 488
- McDowell, David** 91
- medico international** 20, 37, 38, 139, 141, 144, 239, 496
- Ministry of Martyrs and Anfal Affairs** 21, 86, 88, 89, 103, 107, 108, 109, 110, 129-131, 134, 147, 174, 175, 179, 184, 186, 188, 192, 196, 197, 204, 205, 267, 277, 290, 303, 305, 307, 309, 328, 338, 344, 347, 370-371, 380, 382, 385, 387, 389, 391, 393, 397, 401, 415, 417, 449, 458, 465-467, 472, 475, 478, 482, 483, 488
- Mohammed, Shazada Hussein** 5, 7, 339, 377, 378
- Mossul** 84, 86, 107, 125, 227, 253, 342, 353
- Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo** 260, 266
- mujamma'a*, Pl.: *mujamma'at*, *see also*: collective towns 17, 91-93, 100, 101, 177
- Mujawajo, Esther** 362
- Mustafa, Amin Nawshirwan** 132, 168, 176
- mustashar*, *see also*: collaborators 92, 197, 244
- Najaf** 105, 339, 344
- namus see*: honour
- National Defence Battalions** 87, 96
- no-fly zones** 106, 107, 249, 253, 267
- Norwegian People's Aid** 142, 283
- Nugra Salman prison** 9, 17, 100, 164, 171, 172, 181, 187, 189, 190-192, 194, 196-198, 202, 222, 228-235, 239, 240, 242, 243, 278, 284, 296, 340, 348, 357, 359, 361, 398, 400, 403, 404, 410, 430, 434, 438, 439, 442, 444, 445, 449, 453, 454, 456, 482
- Nuremberg Trials** 63, 116
- Omar, Adalat** 23, 451-453
- Oil-for-Food Agreement** 111, 289
- pasdaran* 98, 250, 251
- patriarchal family organization** 267-284
- patrilineal family patterns** 267, 268, 272, 327, 406, 418, 489
- patrilocal patterns** 268, 327, 405, 406, 407, 418
- Patriotic Union of Kurdistan** (PUK) 88, 89, 90, 94, 95, 98, 108, 110, 111, 123, 127, 128, 131-134, 145, 168, 174, 181, 182, 184-186, 194, 204, 205, 288, 292, 308, 313, 314, 336, 381, 390, 392, 402, 405, 409, 429, 434, 439, 461, 462, 463
- peshmerga* 27, 89, 90, 92, 94, 95, 97, 99, 101, 105, 106, 107, 123, 129, 132, 168-170, 173, 181, 186, 194, 195, 203, 205, 212, 215, 218, 223-225, 231, 248, 253, 262, 284, 287, 289, 290, 296, 305, 306, 312, 336, 338, 353, 364, 381, 382, 386, 396, 434, 440, 449, 469, 475
- Physicians for Human Rights** 100, 254
- poison gas** 16, 22, 95, 97, 99, 102, 106, 140, 141, 254, 306, 357, 382
- Production Sharing Agreements** (PSA) 130
- prostitution** 113, 114, 294, 327

- Qasim**, Abd al-Karim 68
- Regime Crimes Liaison Office** (RCLO) 342, 354
- Rizgary**  
changes after 2003 395-400  
transforming location 415-418
- Rumsfeld**, Donald 116
- safe havens** 106, 110
- Schmidt**, Lissy 141
- second-generation Anfal survivors**  
13, 164, 201, 317, 384, 389, 401, 411, 414, 415, 419, 457, 461-463, 465, 471, 478, 483, 489
- sexual violence** 33, 46, 47, 120, 154, 327, 413, 451-454, 489  
during Anfal 23, 236, 236, 237  
after Anfal 294  
at the Iraqi High Tribunal 359-362  
rape 289, 294, 295, 359, 360, 361, 391, 451-454
- Sha'aban Intifatha** 105
- Sharia** 122, 123, 128
- sharif** *see*: honour
- Shatt al-Arab** 78
- Sheikh Wasan** 95
- Son of Babylon** 339, 377, 378
- »**Sons of Iraq**« 124
- State of Law Coalition** 124, 369
- Sumud** 177-180, 243-247
- Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution** (SCIRI) 105
- Talabani**, Jalal 88, 89, 108, 123, 128, 132, 134, 308, 346, 364, 381
- Topzawa camp** 170-172, 191, 192, 194, 202, 223, 225-228, 230
- Transitional Administrative Law** (TAL) 117, 121
- Transitional National Assembly** (TNA) 117, 121
- Treaty of Lausanne** (1923) 83, 85
- Treaty of Sèvres** (1920) 83
- Truth and Reconciliation Commission South Africa** (TRC) 63
- Turkmen** 108, 123, 219, 369, 370, 373, 374, 375, 386
- Tuz Khurmatu** 146, 170, 173, 217, 227, 264, 359, 373, 375, 395
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees** 120, 526
- United Nations Security Council Resolutions**  
No. 661, 6 August 1990 104  
No. 688, 5 April 1991 107  
No. 986, 14 April 1995 (Oil-for-Food) 111, 178, 289  
No. 1153, 20 February 1998 112  
No. 1441, 8 November 2002 114  
No. 1483, 22 May 2003 116
- US-led invasion** (1991) 17, 82, 104-105, 139, 248
- US-led invasion** (2003) 15, 68, 81, 82, 114-115, 120, 145, 333, 339, 381
- van Bruinessen**, Martin 83
- van der Stoel**, Max 72, 141, 527
- von Sponeck**, Hans Graf 113, 525
- widows** (status) 268, 269
- women**  
under the Baath regime 75-76  
during the Iran-Iraq war 79  
under sanctions 113  
under US-occupation after 2003 120-121  
in Kurdistan-Iraq (after 2003) 133-135  
and family organization in Germyan 267 - 284
- Women for Women International** 75, 120, 529
- World Health Organization** (WHO) 35, 394, 529
- xawen** (patron) 268, 269, 271, 275, 278, 285, 291, 292, 295
- Yezidi** 84, 108, 123, 335



## Zentrum Moderner Orient

Geisteswissenschaftliche Zentren Berlin e.V.

### Studien

- Bd. 1 Joachim Heidrich (Hg.): **Changing Identities** – The Transformation of Asian and African Societies under Colonialism (1994)
- Bd. 2 Achim von Oppen / Richard Rottenburg (Hg.): **Organisationswandel in Afrika** – Kollektive Praxis und kulturelle Aneignung (1995)
- Bd. 3 Jan-Georg Deutsch: **Educating the Middlemen** – A Political and Economic History of Statutory Cocoa Marketing in Nigeria, 1936-47 (1995)
- Bd. 4 Gerhard Höpp (Hg.): **Fremde Erfahrungen** – Asiaten und Afrikaner in Deutschland, Österreich und in der Schweiz bis 1945 (1996)
- Bd. 5 Helmut Bley: **Afrika: Geschichte und Politik** – Ausgewählte Beiträge 1967-1992 (1997)
- Bd. 6 Gerhard Höpp: **Muslimen in der Mark** – Als Kriegsgefangene und Internierte in Wünsdorf und Zossen, 1914 - 1924 (1997)
- Bd. 7 Jonker, Gerdien (Hg.): Kern und Rand. Religiöse Minderheiten aus der Türkei in Deutschland (1999)
- Bd. 8 Henner Fürtig: **Islamische Weltauffassung und außenpolitische Konzeptionen der iranischen Staatsführung** seit dem Tod Ajatollah Khomeinis (1998)
- Bd. 9 Brigitte Bühler-Probst: **Mündliche Überlieferungen** – Geschichte und Geschichten der Wiya im Grasland von Kamerun (1999)
- Bd. 10 Katja Füllberg-Stollberg / Petra Heidrich / Ellinor Schöne (Hg.): **Dissociation and Appropriation** – Responses to Globalization in Asia and Africa (1999)
- Bd. 12 Reinhard Köbber / Dieter Neubert / Achim von Oppen: **Gemeinschaften in einer entgrenzten Welt** (1999)
- Bd. 13 Gerhard Höpp / Brigitte Reinwald: **Fremdeinsätze** – Afrikaner und Asiaten in europäischen Kriegen (2000)
- Bd. 14 Petra Heidrich / Heike Liebau (Hg.): **Akteure des Wandels?** – Lebensläufe und Gruppenbilder an Schnittstellen von Kulturen (2001)
- Bd. 15 Dietrich Reetz (Hg.): **Sendungsbewußtsein oder Eigennutz** – Zu Motivation und Selbstverständnis islamischer Mobilisierung (2001)
- Bd. 16 Gerhard Höpp: **Mufti-Papiere** – Briefe, Memoranden, Reden und Aufrufe Amin al-Husainis aus dem Exil 1940-1945 (2. Aufl. 2004)
- Bd. 17 Katja Füllberg-Stolberg: **Amerika in Afrika** – Die Rolle der Afroamerikaner in den Beziehungen zwischen den USA und Afrika 1880 - 1910 (2003)
- Bd. 18 Brigitte Reinwald: **Reisen durch den Krieg** – Erfahrungen und Lebensstrategien westafrikanischer Weltkriegsveteranen der französischen Kolonialarmee (2005)
- Bd. 19 Gerhard Höpp / Peter Wien / René Wildangel (Hg.): **Blind für die Geschichte ?** – Arabische Begegnungen mit dem Nationalsozialismus (2004)
- Bd. 20 Georg Berkemer / Margret Frenz (eds.): **Sharing Sovereignty** – The Little Kingdom in South Asia (2004)
- Bd. 21 Nora Lafi (ed.): **Municipalités méditerranéennes**. Les réformes urbaines ottomanes au miroir d'une histoire comparée (Moyen Orient, Maghreb, Europe méridionale) (2005)
- Bd. 22 Sonja Hegasy, Elke Kaschl (eds.): **Changing Values Among Youth**. Examples from the Arab World and Germany (2007)
- Bd. 23 Krajewski, Patrick: **Kautschuk, Quarantäne, Krieg**. Dhauhandel in Ostafrika, 1880-1914, (2006)

- Bd. 24 Wildangel, René: **Zwischen Achse und Mandatsmacht**. Palästina und der Nationalsozialismus (2007)
- Bd. 25 Hermann, Katja: **Palästina in Israel**. Selbstorganisation und politische Partizipation der palästinensischen Minderheit in Israel (2008)
- Bd. 26 AtaTaheri/Burkhard Ganzer: **Deutsche Agenten bei iranischen Stämmen 1942-1944**. Ein Augenzeugenbericht (2008)
- Bd. 27 Gräf, Bettina: **Medien-Fatwas@Yusuf al-Qaradawi**. Die Popularisierung des islamischen Rechts (2010)
- Bd. 28 Bromber, Katrin: **Imperiale Propaganda**. Die ostafrikanische Militärpresse im Zweiten Weltkrieg (2009)
- Bd. 29 Israel Gershoni / Götz Nordbruch: **Sympathie und Schrecken**. Begegnungen mit Faschismus und Nationalsozialismus in Ägypten, 1922-1937 (2011)
- Bd. 30 Rana von Mende-Altaylı: **Die Polygamiedebatte in der Spätphase des Osmanischen Reichs**. Kontroversen und Reformen (2013)
- Bd. 31 Britta Frede: **Die Erneuerung der Tigāniya in Mauretanien**. Popularisierung religiöser Ideen in der Kolonialzeit (2014)
- Bd. 32 Sophie Roche (Hg.): **Central Asian Intellectuals on Islam**. Between Scholarship, Politics and Identity (2014)
- Bd. 33 Feras Krimsti: **Die Unruhen von 1850 in Aleppo**. Gewalt im urbanen Raum (2014)

Weitere Publikationen s. <http://www.zmo.de/publikationen/index.html>

Distribution:



KLAUS SCHWARZ VERLAG • BERLIN

Klaus Schwarz Verlag Berlin

Fax +49 (0)30 322 51 83

[www.klaus-schwarz-verlag.com](http://www.klaus-schwarz-verlag.com)

*The book addresses one of the most heinous crimes of Saddam Hussein's Baath regime in Iraq, the so-called Anfal Campaign against the Kurdish population in 1988: within a few months, thousands of villages were destroyed; up to 182,000 men and women abducted and murdered; tens of thousands of civilians detained and forcibly re-settled. Based on longstanding work with women Anfal survivors in the Garmyan region of Kurdistan-Iraq, the author explores their psychosocial situation and coping strategies over more than twenty years. She documents the women's path from victims to survivors, their struggle for truth, justice, and acknowledgement, and their conflicts with both the Kurdish national victimhood discourse and Iraqi national strategies in dealing with the past. The research gives an exceptional long-term psychological perspective on coping with extreme violence, beyond common discourses of trauma and "healing". It links psychological trauma research to memory studies and the debate on socio-political reconstruction in post-conflict societies.*

*Karin Mlodoč is a psychologist and co-founder of the German NGO HAUKARI e.V. that assists women victims of violence in Kurdistan-Iraq. From 2008 to 2011, she was a research fellow at Zentrum Moderner Orient.*

ISBN: 978-3-87997-719-2



9 783879 977192



KLAUS SCHWARZ VERLAG · BERLIN