The Anfal operations in Iraqi Kurdistan

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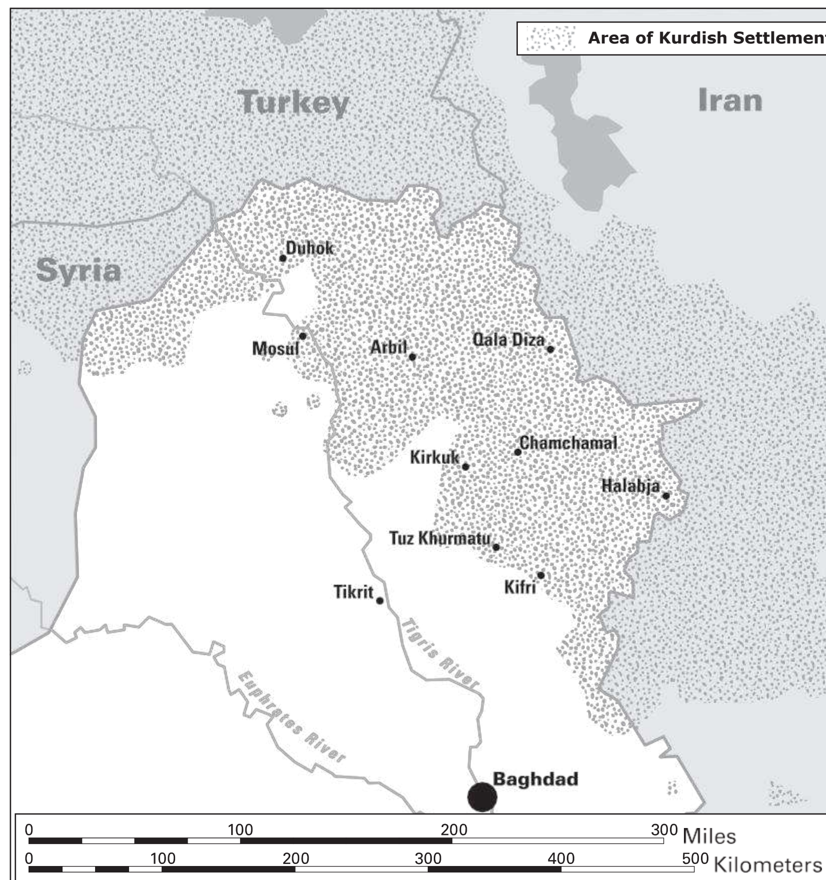

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Introduction

The 1988 *Anfal* or ‘Spoils’ operations were an attempt by the Iraqi Baath regime to solve the long-standing problem of armed Kurdish insurgency once and for all. They were named after the eighth sura of the Qur’an, Sûrat al-Anfâl. Although presented as a counterinsurgency measure against Kurdish peshmerga (guerrilla) fighters by the regime, the operations primarily targeted the Kurdish civilian population living in rural areas not under Iraqi government control; other ethnic groups living in or near these areas were also affected. The number of victims has not yet been conclusively established. Estimates of the number of people killed vary from 50,000 to almost 200,000. Many more were driven from their homes and resettled in so-called *mujamma‘at* or relocation camps. In these operations alone, an estimated 1,200 mainly Kurdish-inhabited villages were razed to the ground; their livestock would be killed or confiscated, and their agricultural fields and orchards would be destroyed.

Despite being presented as a counterinsurgency measure, these operations in fact acquired genocidal proportions, as they involved the intent to kill the local civilian population as such, for no reason other than their living in the wrong place. This genocidal intent becomes clear from Iraqi government documents captured in the 1991 uprising; important further evidence was provided by survivors and eyewitnesses during the so-called Anfal trials, held in 2006 against the main perpetrators, including former Iraqi president Saddam Hussein and his cousin, Ali Hasan al-Majid.

Thus, the Anfal operations are among the best documented cases of genocide. They have also been recognized as genocidal in several court cases, and by the parliaments of several countries. Despite the abundance of publicly accessible documentary evidence and testimony, however, relatively little research on the operations’ course and character has been published in Western languages. The most important of these publications is undoubtedly the 1993 Human Rights Watch report, *Genocide in Iraq*, republished in 1995 as *Iraq’s Crime of Genocide*. Important later book-

length studies, like Fischer-Tahir 2003, Hardi 2010, and Mlodoch 2015, focus less on the operations themselves than on their long-term consequences for (female) survivors. As the analysis of the HRW report has not been modified in the light of new evidence or of the 2006 trial, or been challenged or developed by later studies, much of the factual account below is based on the indispensable original 1993 report.

Underlying causes of the Anfal

Three main historical trends may be seen as leading up to the *Anfal* operations: the so-called "Kurdish question"; the character of Saddam Hussein's Baath regime; and the Iran–Iraq war that broke out in 1980. First, there was the failure of successive Iraqi governments to find an adequate and enduring political settlement of the Kurdish question (ever since the formation of the independent state of Iraq, there had been disagreements about the precise relationship between the central, Arab-led government in Baghdad and the predominately Kurdish-inhabited regions in the north of the country; put another way, the precise political, economic, and cultural status of the Kurdish regions of Iraq were an ongoing point of contention). During the 1960s, episodes of diplomatic activity between the Baghdad government and the political leadership of the Kurds had alternated with Kurdish armed uprisings and their sup- pression by Iraqi military force; in March 1970 an agreement between the Kurdish leadership and the Iraqi government had been signed, but this was quickly seen as a dead letter by the Kurds. In 1974 a full-scale war broke out between the Baghdad regime and the Kurdish movement led by Barzani;it was not until after Saddam Hussein had signed an agreement with the Shah of Iran, which involved, among others, the latter withdrawing all support for the Iraqi Kurds, that the Kurdish front collapsed in the spring of 1975.

A second underlying trend was the Baath regime's character, in particular its harsh ways of dealing with any kind of opposition or treason, whether real, suspected, or imaginary. For example, during the 1970s, the regime engaged in the violent persecution of not only Kurds,

but also Shiites living in the South of Iraq, and members of the Iraqi Communist Party, with which the Baath Party had earlier, in 1972, formed an alliance through the establishment of a National Front.

The style of Baathist rule was based on Eastern European and, more specifically, Stalinist models. Not only was the Kurdish autonomous region unilaterally established in 1970 by the Baghdad regime modeled on the autonomous *okrugs* that had been established in the early Soviet Union; more generally, Saddam carefully modeled his rule after Stalin's government-by-terror. As a result, Saddam Hussein's rule over Iraq, effective since the early 1970s and officially consecrated after a 1979 coup in which Saddam ousted president and fellow Baathist Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr, systematically relied on purges, show-trials, disappearances, and collective forms of punishment against whole families, tribes, villages, or population groups. It also relied on a considerable overlap between party organization and security apparatus, thus strengthening its attempts at total control of the country. Baathist policies toward the Kurds in the wake of the 1975 collapse of resistance had involved, among others, the forcible resettlement of several hundred thousand Kurds in the south of Iraq; the settlement of Arabs in predominantly Kurdish-inhabited areas; and the establishment of prohibited zones with a shoot-on-sight policy along the borders with Iran and Turkey. Collectively, these measures went far beyond counterinsurgency; they also aimed at changing the ethnic balance of the region, and at weakening, if not destroying, Kurdish ethnic identity.

The third long-term trend that led to the *Anfal* was the 1980–1988 war between Iran and Iraq. Repeatedly, the course of this protracted war induced a fear in the Baath regime regarding its very survival; moreover, the Iraqi Kurdish parties played an ambiguous role, alternatively enterng into negotiations with Baghdad and siding with the Iranians, not to mention the frequent infighting and realignments among the various opposition groups. Iraq's predicament was especially bleak in 1987, as Iran appeared to be regaining momentum after reopening its northern front in March, in collusion with Iraqi Kurdish guerrillas. Moreover, in

the course of 1987, the major Iraqi Kurdish parties, including the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), headed by Massoud Barzani, and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), headed by Jalal Talabani, decided to join forces, ending their long-standing differences and years of infighting. The Kurds' tactical alliance with Iran posed a new threat to the Iraqi regime, which reacted by implementing increasingly drastic counterinsurgency measures. In response, on March 29, Iraqi President Saddam Hussein promulgated decree No. 160, making Ali Hasan al-Majid director of the Baath Party's Directorate of Northern Affairs, which was responsible for the autonomous Kurdish region in northern Iraq. Al-Majid, until then the director of General Security, was granted sweeping powers over all civilian, military, and security institutions of the region. He wasted no time in making use of them. In April he ordered the first attacks, including chemical bombardments, not only against the PUK mountain headquarters but also against the Kurdish villagers and villages that could provide the PUK with shelter and supplies. During this campaign, at least 703 Kurdish villages were destroyed.

After a few months, however, these operations were discontinued, possibly because the Iraqi army was too preoccupied with Iranian offensives. But al-Majid's June 1987 directives present a clear indication of what was to come. His order, Document 28/3650, dated June 3, imposed both a total blockade and a shoot-on-sight policy on the areas outside government control: "The armed forces must kill any human being or animal present within these areas." Document 28/4008 of June 20 provides a standing order for the summary execution of all (male) captives: "Those between the ages of 15 and 70 shall be executed after any useful information has been obtained from them." In part, these documents reaffirmed, and probably reinvigorated, standing Iraqi policies that had been in place since the late 1970s. (Note: both documents are reproduced in Human Rights Watch/Middle East's *Bureaucracy of Repression* [1994].).

The next organizational step toward *Anfal* was the nationwide

census that was held on October 17, 1987. According to Human Rights Watch, this census was (at least in the Kurdish North) less a registration of population data than a programmatic government directive that not only identified the target population of the future operations, but also indiscriminately marginalized and criminalized it. All traffic to and from areas outside government control was forbidden, and relatives of alleged saboteurs were expelled from government-held areas. All individuals who consequently failed to participate in the census were stripped of their citizenship and were considered deserters or saboteurs who deserved the death penalty. It has not yet, however, been established beyond doubt precisely where these forbidden zones outside government control were located, how they were defined, and whether they coincided with the areas where the *Anfal* did in fact take place. At the time, only a few stretches of land in inaccessible mountain areas and along the border with Iran were wholly out of government reach.

Apart from this gradual escalation of counterinsurgency violence, there are two well-documented precedents or cases—not, strictly speaking, related to the *Anfal*—that indicate the Iraqi regime's readiness to resort to the killing of Kurds, as such: the 1983 disappearance of Barzani clansmen and the 1988 chemical attack against Halabja. The background of both incidents involves not only the armed Kurdish insurgency, but also the Iraqi war against Iran.

After the 1975 collapse of the Kurdish front, hundreds of thousands of Kurdish villagers had already been deported to relocation camps or *mujamma'at*, their traditional dwellings having been destroyed and declared forbidden territory. Thousands of members of the Barzani clan had been deported to southern Iraq in 1976. In 1981 they had been relocated in the Qushtepe *mujamma'a* just south of Arbil; and then, in 1983, after Iran had captured the border town of Haj Omran with the aid of KDP guerrillas, the Iraqi government took its revenge on the Barzani clan. According to the then-speaker of the KDP, Hoshyar Zebari (at present Iraq's foreign minister), over 8,000 men were taken from the Qushtepe camp and never seen again; the remaining women were

reduced to a life of abject poverty. Thus, government policies not only aimed at the physical elimination of Kurds associated with disloyal elements, but also aimed at the symbolic destruction of the honor of both the male and female members of the proud Barzani tribe.

It was the March 16, 1988 chemical attack against the town of Halabja, in which an estimated 5,000 Kurdish civilians died a gruesome death, rather than the *Anfal*, that initially entered Kurdish collective memory and international public opinion as a symbol of the Iraqi repression of the Kurds. The attack was captured, if not symbolized, in the indelible image of a Kurdish father clutching his infant son, both killed by poison gas, shot by the Turkish-Kurdish photographer Ramazan Öztürk. Although the Halabja attack was not part of the *Anfal* operations proper (which only targeted rural areas, not cities), it certainly followed the same destructive logic. It was prompted by the Kurdish–Iranian occupation of the city in early March 1988, in an attempt to ease the pressure on the PUK headquarters, which at the time was bearing the brunt of the first *Anfal* operation. The chemical attack on Halabja does not appear to have had any clear strategic aim, however; rather, it was in all likelihood meant as a warning—or, it was possibly conducted as an act of revenge. After the attack, nothing happened to Halabja for several months. It was not until July 1988 that Iraqi troops reoccupied the city, which they then proceeded to demolish. The remaining population was relocated to "New Halabja" *mujamma'a*, a few miles down the road.

The Course of the Operations

The *Anfal* operations proper began in February 1988; presumably, by then, the Iraqi regime felt that Iranian pressure had eased sufficiently to allow for the redeployment of large numbers of troops in the north. The operations were conducted on a much larger scale and were of a much more systematic character than the spring 1987 counterinsurgency: several army divisions participated in them, together with personnel of general intelligence and the Baath Party— along with Kurdish irregulars (also referred to as *jash*). In the course of the 1980s,

the Baath government, whose military forces were drawn to the frontline with Iran, had established Kurdish irregular troops to maintain control in the rural areas of the north. In fact, however, numerous *jash* leaders maintained contacts with the Kurdish insurgents as well.

The first *Anfal* operation, starting February 23, was primarily directed against the PUK headquarters near the Iranian border, but it also extended to surrounding villages. Most villagers, however, appear to have escaped into Iran or to the larger cities of the Kurdish region in Iraq. Thus, whether by accident or design, the first *Anfal* does not appear to have involved the large-scale disappearance of civilians. This, however, was to change in the following operations.

In the following months, seven further operations were carried out, systematically targeting the different areas that were still under (partial) Kurdish control. These operations were generally carried out in the same way: typically, they involved surrounding the target area, which was then exposed to massive shelling and air attacks, including bombings with chemical weapons. Apparently, these attacks were intended primarily to destroy the morale of the villagers and guerrillas (who had long become used to conventional bombardments). Next, with the target population dislodged, government forces gradually encircled it and mounted a massive ground attack by army troops and irregulars—or, alternatively, irregulars persuaded the villagers to surrender.

The Kurdish captives were first brought to local collection points, mostly by Kurdish irregulars; subsequently, government personnel took them to centralized transit camps at military bases in Topzawa near Kirkuk, in Tikrit, and in Duhok. Here, they were divided by age and gender, and stripped of their remaining possessions. The vast majority of captured adult men were loaded onto windowless trucks and taken to execution sites in central Iraq. Several people, however, survived these mass executions. All of them report having seen rows of trenches dug by bulldozers, each holding hundreds of corpses. It is more than likely that tens of thou- sands of Kurdish male civilians were massacred in this way, merely on account of their Kurdish ethnicity and of their living in an

area declared out of bounds by the regime of Saddam Hussein.

Unknown numbers of women, children, and elderly are also believed to have been massacred. More typically, however, women were left alive and relocated. There also is credible testimony that many younger women were sold off as brides, or rather into virtual slavery, to rich men elsewhere—not only in Iraq, but also in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. These reports were corroborated by a December 1989 document, which the Kurds claimed to have captured from Kirkuk's Directorate of Intelligence following the 2003 ousting of Saddam Hussein's regime by the U.S. government. The memorandum to the Baghdad General Directorate of Intelligence, marked "Top Secret," states that a group of girls aged between 14 and 29 had been captured during the *Anfal* operations, and "sent to the harems and nightclubs of the Arab Republic of Egypt." (Note: A copy of this document and a partial translation can be found at www.kurdmedia.com/news.asp?id=4057.)

Many elderly captives were initially resettled in the Nuqrat al-Salman concentration camp in southern Iraq. In the appalling living conditions there, up to 10% of the inmates may have died in the space of a few months. Often, corpses, refused a proper burial, were left exposed in the summer heat (see Account 5, below). On September 6, 1988, the regime announced a general amnesty for all Iraqi Kurds. Following this announcement, the surviving Nuqrat al-Salman prisoners were released. They were not allowed, however, to return to their villages; instead, they were resettled in *mujamma'at* elsewhere in the North.

On August 20, 1988, a cease-fire between Iran and Iraq came into effect. The Iraqi army now had its hands free to finish its campaign against the Kurdish insurgents. On August 25 it initiated the final *Anfal*, directed against what remained of the traditional KDP strongholds in the Badinan region near the Turkish border. This area was not entirely sealed off, however, and over 60,000 Kurds managed to escape to Turkey. Following this exodus, substantial eyewitness reports about the Iraqi regime's continuing chemical attacks against its Kurdish civilians

reached the international community, along with earlier journalistic reporting on the Halabja attack (see below). Press coverage led to some minor and inconsequential protests by Western governments. Among others, the U.S. government failed to act on reports published by one of its own officials—U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee member Peter Galbraith. In international forums like the UN Security Council, the Iraqis avoided condemnation by cleverly manipulating remaining Cold War cleavages and existing fears of Iran.

The violence against the civilian population did not end with the completion of the final *Anfal*. Numerous refugees were lured back by the September 6 amnesty announcement, but many of them disappeared upon their return.

The fate of the returning members of minority groups like the Yezidis and Assyrian Christians deserves particular mention in this context. Unbeknown to themselves, these groups had been excluded from the amnesty by the government, which considered them Arabs rather than Kurds. Upon returning to Iraq, they were separated from the Muslim Kurds, and many of them, including women, children, and elderly, were taken to unknown destinations and never seen again.

After the amnesty, the surviving deportees were brought back to the north and simply dumped on relocation sites near the main roads to the region's major cities, surrounded by barbed-wire fences. Unlike the victims of most earlier deportations, they were not provided with any housing, construction materials, food, or medicine (let alone financial compensation), but just left to their own devices.

There were significant differences in the execution of the successive *Anfal* operations. In the first *Anfal*, few non-combatants disappeared. In later operations, adult males were taken to mass execution sites far away from the Kurdish region. In the final *Anfal*, captured men were often executed on the spot. Likewise, only in the operations in the Kirkuk region do women and children appear to have been executed. It is not clear whether such variations reflect an escalating logic of violence, a differentiated reaction to the degree of resistance encountered, or

simply the whims of local field commanders.

The captured documents not only show a high degree of secrecy surrounding the operations, but also an extreme concentration of power, and the bureaucratic structure that made them possible. There are indications, for example, that military intelligence did not know precisely what was going on and that lower army officers on various occasions balked at the standing order to execute all of the captives.

In the operations, the Kurdish irregular troops, or *jash* ("donkey foal") as they are disparagingly called among Kurds, played an important but ambiguous role. For many Kurds, enlisting as an irregular was a convenient means of escaping active front duty in the war with Iran (and of making a living). Other tribal leaders siding with the government, however, had their own accounts to settle with either the Kurdish parties or with rival tribes and villages in nearby areas.

The Kurdish irregulars appear to have had a subordinate status among the personnel involved in the operations. While they had a better knowledge of the mountainous territory than the regular security forces and could more easily persuade the population to surrender, not all of them were wholly reliable in the implementation of al-Majid's orders.

It is also unlikely that all irregular troops were equally well informed about the operations' true character. Apparently, many of them had merely been told to help in the rounding up of villagers for the purpose of relocation. Many, in fact, appear to have made a genuine effort to help the captives. Others, however, participated with glee in the rounding up of civilians and in the looting of their possessions. In some cases, the irregular troops granted those Kurds they rounded up acts of clemency in return for bribes. A better appreciation of the role of the *jash* is hampered to some extent by the fact that after the 1991 uprising in the north, all (powerful) government collaborators were granted a general amnesty by the Iraqi Kurdistan Front, and most of them continued to wield considerable power under the new Kurdish rulers. As a result, their previous actions were conveniently overlooked, and indeed became a taboo topic.

In the spring of 1989, al-Majid resigned as the Baath Party's Northern Bureau chief. To all appearances, the problem of armed Kurdish insurgency had been solved once and for all. The major Kurdish parties had been thoroughly demoralized, and indeed discredited, by the government's brutal actions. They also faced fierce internal criticisms because of their tactics, which had left the civilian population exposed to the Iraqi onslaught. Virtually the entire surviving rural Kurdish population had been violently pacified and relocated to easily controlled resettlement camps.

In the 1988 *Anfal* operations alone, an estimated 1,200 Kurdish villages were destroyed. The number of civilian casualties has been variously estimated: Kurdish sources, based on extrapolations from the numbers of villages destroyed, at first spoke of some 182,000 people killed or missing. Human Rights Watch, a major international human rights organization, made a more conservative estimate of between 50,000 and 100,000 civilian dead. During the spring 1991 negotiations between the Kurds and the Iraqi government, the director of the operations, al-Majid himself, at one point exclaimed: "What is this exaggerated figure of 182,000? It could not have been more than a hundred thousand!"

Impact of the Anfal

The operations had a devastating effect not only on the Kurdish parties, ostensibly the main target of the operations, but also on the local population at large. In some of the operations, Kurdish forces had put up a fierce resistance; but they were unable to counter the demoralizing effect of chemical weapons, or to protect the local civilian population. After the end of the operations, some prominent members of the main parties called for soul searching and self-criticism, asking if they had not exposed the population to unacceptable risks.

Among the Kurdish population at large, and also among Arab civilians and even among some government officials, there have been a few but significant episodes of resistance and of support for the victims.

In the third *Anfal*, for example, the local population of Chamchamal rose up in revolt against the deportation of villagers. During the fifth, resistance of the *peshmergas* (Kurdish guerrillas) turned out to be so strong that two further operations against the same area were mounted, keeping government forces occupied for over three months.

Especially in Arbil, the local urban population, at times at great personal risk to themselves, made a prolonged effort to help the deported villagers. Several survivors of the executions, notably Taymur ‘Abdallah from Kulajo near Kifri and Ako Izzedin Sayyid Ismael from Warani near Tuz Khormatu, were harbored by Iraqi army personnel or Arab tribesmen. (Note: for fragments of Taimour Abdallah’s testimony, see Account 3 below; for a fuller interview, see Qurbany 2015. For Ismael’s story, see www.globeandmail.com/servlet/story/RTGAM.20030403.unolen0405/BNStory/International.)

Among Iraq’s Kurdish population at large, the operations instilled a pervasive fear of the regime. After the failure of the 1991 uprising, this fear caused a massive panic and the exodus of hundreds of thousands of Iraqi Kurds to the borders with Turkey and Iran. Following the establishment of a de facto autonomous Kurdish region in northern Iraq in late 1991, however, the *Anfal* became a symbol of the total delegitimation of Baathist—and, by extension, Arab—rule over Iraq’s Kurds. No trials of former Kurdish collaborators were ever conducted, however; not even a truth commission was established, as had been done in other places with a similarly violent and traumatic past.

The *Anfal* operations have had a particularly traumatic effect on women. One significant aspect of the *Anfal* operations was their systematic differentiation by age and gender. Though there were certainly exceptions, most male youths and younger men would be rounded up for execution, whereas women and the elderly would be relocated either in the area or in the south of Iraq. Generally, after returning, wives and other surviving females were not formally notified of their male relatives’ deaths. As a result, they could not remarry or claim inheritances. Many thus became entirely dependent on meagre Regional

Government handouts or irregular jobs, often bearing the stigma of alleged sexual violence or loss of honor.

Responses to the *Anfal*

The Iraqi regime made a strong effort to keep the true nature of the *Anfal* operations secret, or at least to maintain strict control over the flow of information. That said, throughout much of 1988, Iraqi radio proudly broadcast news of the "heroic *Anfal* campaigns," allegedly directed against saboteurs and collaborators of Iran; but these reports carefully avoided reference to the use of chemical weapons, the deportations and executions of civilians, and the razing of villages that accompanied the operations. On several occasions, victims of chemical attacks were dragged out of nearby hospitals and disappeared; this may have been a form of collective punishment, but it is more likely that the regime was attempting to eliminate all eyewitnesses at this stage.

Despite several substantial investigations by journalists, academics, and parliamentary committees, the extent of international knowledge of, and indeed complicity in, Iraq's crimes still awaits assessment. Various European companies continued to supply Iraq with ingredients for chemical weapons, even at a time when its use of such weapons against the Iranian army was well documented. In the United States, the Reagan and Bush Sr. Administrations actively supported Iraq with military advisors, equipment, and atropine (a common antidote to mustard gas), and blocked international diplomatic initiatives against Iraq. It is by now certain that the U.S government at that time had detailed knowledge about the campaign of destruction, of its scale, and of Iraq's systematic use of chemical weapons against its own civilians. In this regard, Meiselas (1997) has reproduced a Joint Chiefs of Staff document from the National Security Archives, dated August 4, 1987, which speaks of a campaign coordinated by al-Majid, in which 300 villages had been destroyed, and of "the ruthless repression which also includes the use of chemical weapons" (pp. 312–313). Likewise, former U.S. military intelligence officer Rick Francona (1999), who served as a military advisor to the Iraqi regime in 1987 and 1988, asserts that the U.S. government was

well aware of Iraq's use of chemical agents (in particular, nerve gas), not only against Iranian soldiers but also against its own civilians, but failed to act on this knowledge, as it wished to prevent an Iranian victory at any price (cf. Hiltermann, 2007).

Prior to the 2003 Iraq war, the chances for prosecuting the perpetrators of the *Anfal* were slim. In fact, Iraq's well-established use of weapons of mass destruction hardly even figured in the justifications for that war. That war itself was legitimized by Iraq's alleged (and as it turned out, imaginary) threat of weapons of mass destruction, rather than by its actual use of such weapons in the 1980s. Following the invasion and subsequent overthrow of the Baath regime, almost all senior members of the Iraqi regime went into hiding. In due course, however, most of them were captured, including the two who bore primary responsibility for the *Anfal* operations: former Iraqi president Saddam Hussein and his cousin, Ali Hasan al-Majid. In late 2006 both were tried by a local tribunal rather than the International Court of Justice. Saddam was initially tried for his role in the 1982 Dujail massacre. Ultimately, he was condemned to death for the latter crimes only, and was executed in December 2006, before the *Anfal* trials had run their full course. In January 2010, al-Majid was executed as well, having been convicted of genocide for his role in the *Anfal.*

Interpretations of the *Anfal*

There is no definitive study of the *Anfal* operations as of yet; no balanced or comprehensive assessment exists of the documentary and other evidence currently available. What little substantial research there is seems to waver on how to qualify the attitude of the government that was responsible for them. As noted above, labels like "racist" or "fascist" have been used by Kurdish nationalist and foreign analysts; local Islamist voices see the *Anfal* as evidence of the infidel (*kafir*) character of Hussein's regime. Such terms, however, are not very helpful in interpreting the operations, or even in characterizing the animus that drove them. One thing seems clear, though: The *Anfal* operations were not the culmination of any pervasive or long-standing ethnic

antagonisms between Kurdish and Arab population groups in Iraq, but rather the result of centralized and highly secretive government policies. Regarding the finer points of the character and significance of the *Anfal*, too little detailed information is available at present to allow for anything more than informed guesses.

The *Anfal* operations cannot simply be explained as a drastic form of counterinsurgency; but, then again, characterizing the mindset that made them possible is no easy task. The question of whether, and to what extent, the *Anfal* operations were driven by racist animosity has not yet adequately been answered. At the time, anti-Kurdish racism does not appear to have been a predominant feature of either Iraqi society, Baathist ideology, or the perpetrators' personalities. Although there were occasional ethnic tensions among the different segments of the Iraqi population, there was relatively little grass-roots racial hatred between Kurds and Arabs in Iraq. Even after the 2003 war, whatever tensions there were between Kurds, Arabs, and Turkomans in the north paled in comparison with the horrendous sectarian violence between Sunnis and Shiites in Baghdad (and this violence was mostly the work of urban gangs and militias, rather than of the population at large). This may have changed, however, in the wake of the turmoil caused – or epitomized – by the rise of IS in 2013 and 2014.

In official Baathist discourse, categories of loyalty, treason, and sabotage (which, ultimately, are of a Stalinist inspiration) are much more prominent than ethnic or racial terms; the latter appear to have been rather flexible items anyway, given the Baath regime's at times rather arbitrary and voluntarist way of creating and dissolving ethnic identities by bureaucratic fiat. When overtly racist language *was* used, this typically concerned Iranians and Jews rather than Kurds. Baathist ideology is of an undeniably Arab nationalist character, but it has always been ambivalent as to the inclusion of Iraq's sizable Kurdish population. There are indications, however, that in the course of the 1980s, even the act of stating one's Kurdish or other non-Arab ethnicity increasingly became treated as a criminal offence, if not an act of treason. For

example, smaller ethnic groups, such as Yezidis, Christians, and Shabak, were forcibly registered as Arabs in the 1987 census, and when they subsequently tried to change their ethnicity to "Kurdish", al-Majid had them deported and their villages destroyed.

It is even questionable whether al-Majid himself can be simply labeled a racist. On tape recordings of meetings with senior Party officials he can be heard speaking in a coarse and derogatory manner of Kurds, but his remarks hardly betray any generic hatred of Kurds as an inferior race; rather, he speaks of saboteurs and of uneducated villagers who "live like donkeys." But whatever al-Majid's personal motives and animosities, official discourse consistently proclaimed both Kurds and Arabs as equal parts of the Iraqi people or nation, on the strict condition of their political loyalty.

Religious considerations do not appear to have been a prime motivating or legitimating factor either. Even the Qur'anic name *Anfal*, or "Spoils," has little specific religious significance here; rather, it appears to refer primarily to the right granted to the Kurdish irregulars involved in the operations to loot the possessions of the captured civilians. Despite its increasingly Islamic rhetoric, the Baath Party, which ruled Iraq from 1968 to 2003, was largely secular and was inspired more by 20th-century ideologies and practices of Nazism and Stalinism than by any specifically Islamic tradition.

Of the violent and indeed murderous character of Baathist rule in Iraq, however, there can be no doubt at all. After the conclusion of the *Anfal* operations, only 673 Kurdish villages still stood in the whole of Iraqi Kurdistan. Over the years, the regime had demolished 4,049 Kurdish villages in the north. After the end of the Iran–Iraq war and of the *Anfal* operations proper, state violence increasingly turned toward Kurdish cities.

In July 1988, the largely abandoned town of Halabja was razed to the ground; and in June 1989, the city of Qala Diza, with a population of close to 100,000, which had not been targeted in the *Anfal* and was itself a site of relocation camps, was evacuated and destroyed. It is impossible

to tell where this process of repression and destruction would have led, if it had not been interrupted by the 1990 Gulf Crisis and the ensuing war and uprising.

Importance of and Current Interest in the *Anfal*

The *Anfal* operations formed the genocidal climax of the prolonged conflict between the successive Iraqi regimes and the Kurdish nationalist movement. As previously noted, they were the result of highly centralized and secret government policies rather than widespread ethnic antagonisms that could easily be manipulated or mobilized for political purposes. As a result, the full extent and genocidal character of the atrocities at first escaped public notice. The most notorious event of this period, the widely publicized attack on Halabja in March 1988, was not part of the *Anfal* proper; but it reflected the same policies.

The full scale and bureaucratic nature, and indeed the full horror, of the operations did not become publicly known until the aftermath of the 1991 Gulf War. In the popular uprising against the Iraqi regime, literally tons of documents from various government institutions were captured that provided ample, if partly indirect and circumstantial, evidence of the 1988 genocide. Although many questions remain unanswered, these documents, supplemented by the testimony of numerous surviving victims and eyewitnesses, provided compelling evidence in the genocide trial against Saddam Hussein and his aides, which opened in August 2006.

The authenticity of these documents has been contested by the Iraqi government, but it is extremely unlikely that they are forgeries. They not only form a complex network of interlocking texts of a highly bureaucratic nature, but, in many cases, they closely match the testimony provided by eyewitnesses and survivors. References to government actions are often quite indirect or opaque; thus, few documents openly refer to mass executions or chemical weapons. Even internal documents, as a rule, euphemistically speak of “special attacks” and “special ammunition” when

referring to chemical warfare, or of "return to the national ranks" when reporting individual or collective surrender to government forces.

Taken together, the testimony and the documentary evidence provide detailed insight into the chain of command and, to a lesser extent, into the motives of the perpetrators. Among the personnel participating in them were the first, second, and fifth army divisions; General Security; and numerous members of the Baath Party (in particular, those associated with the Northern Affairs Bureau), as well as irregular troops mostly provided by Kurdish tribal chieftains (during the 1980s, the Baathist government had appointed local tribal leaders as *mustashars* or "advisors" to form irregular troops, and supplied them with arms and money to control the Kurdish countryside).

The command was firmly in the hands of al-Majid, who acted as the head of the Baath Party's Northern Bureau, and who overruled all other authorities. Thus, it appears to have been the regional Baath Party apparatus, rather than the intelligence services, the police, or the army, that was at the heart of the operations. In all likelihood, the firing squads also consisted first and foremost of Party members.

The full story of how the Iraqi regime managed to get away with these crimes remains to be told. From 1988 to the present, the moral and legal significance of the *Anfal* operations has tended to be overruled by political interests. In 1988 Iraq enjoyed near-impunity on the international stage because of its war with the widely disliked and internationally isolated Islamic Republic of Iran, and because of the strategic and economic interests that both Western and Eastern Bloc countries had in Iraq; the Baath regime cleverly played on such interests and on divisions within the appropriate UN bodies, and consequently managed to avoid any meaningful condemnation by the international community. Following the 1991 uprising, massive and detailed evidence of the *Anfal* became available; this included captured government documents, eyewitness accounts, and forensic evidence. For years, Human Rights Watch tried in vain to have a genocide case against Iraq opened at the International Court of Justice, but no country was willing

to initiate legal proceedings—due, in part, to a fear of jeopardizing their chances both in regard to dealing with the Iraqi market (bound to be lucrative again once UN sanctions were lifted) and in the Arab world at large. In July 1995, U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher signed a communique declaring that the *Anfal* operations amounted to genocide, thus endorsing Human Rights Watch's attempts to initiate legal proceedings. As a result, the U.S. government undertook a campaign to have Hussein indicted for genocide and crimes against humanity, largely on the basis of the captured *Anfal* documents. It was, however, pursued erratically and appeared to reflect changing U.S. policies toward Iraq rather than any principled concern for the victims or for international law. Ultimately, no effective juridical steps were ever taken.

In 2003 the United States attacked Iraq, launching a war that was legitimated primarily by Iraq's alleged possession of weapons of mass destruction (which were never discovered, and which the Bush Administration had repeatedly been told by weapons experts would likely never be discovered), and hardly, if at all, by Iraq's actual use of those weapons against Iraqi civilians. Moreover, the fact that some members of the George W. Bush (2000–2008) Administration in the United States had in the 1980s actively supported the Iraqi regime, and continued to do so at the time it was committing its worst atrocities, made this administration's moral arguments for war unconvincing.

Information about the *Anfal* and about Iraq's use of chemical weapons had been gathered, at times at great personal risk, by the likes of the Kurdish researcher Shorsh Rasool, the British journalist Gwynne Roberts, and the U.S. diplomat Peter Galbraith; but it was the capture by Kurdish guerrilla forces of some 18 metric tons of documentary evidence in 1991 that provided the most compelling evidence for both the extent of and the genocidal intent behind the *Anfal* operations. It is unclear how much additional material was captured from the archives of government ministries, security agencies, and Baath Party offices in the chaotic aftermath of the 2003 invasion, and in whose hands these documents ended up—especially the archives of the security office in

Kirkuk, which appears to have been the *Anfal*'s nerve center, would seem crucial, both for legal proceedings and for further research into the precise conduct and character of the operations.

In August 2003 Ali Hasan al-Majid was arrested; in December of the same year, Saddam Hussein was captured by U.S. troops, with the cooperation of local forces. Following some legal wrangling as to when, where, and how trials against members of the former Baath regime should be held, it was decided to have them stand trial in Iraq itself, even though the country's judiciary was hardly prepared for such a massive and complicated operation. In October 2005 court proceedings against Saddam Hussein were initiated. The first trial centered exclusively on an isolated incident, the massacre of 148 Shiite men in reprisal for an assassination attempt against Saddam during a visit to the village of Dujail. Although minor in comparison with numerous other accusations, the Dujail case was relatively well supported by documentary evidence and eyewitness testimony, and promised a speedy condemnation.

In August 2006, the *Anfal* trial started against Saddam Hussein, Ali Hasan al-Majid, and several other defendants. Court proceedings were often tumultuous, and even involved the removal of the chief judge for alleged bias in favor of Saddam. During the trial, however, numerous survivors got a chance to testify against the former dictator. Although Saddam rarely denied the testimony brought against him outright, he repeatedly complained that he had not been given a chance to respond to the charges. It is true that he never did get to hear the documentary evidence.

In the Dujail trial, the death penalty had been demanded, and Saddam Hussein was executed in December 2006. As a result, the *Anfal* trial against him was left unfinished, much to the chagrin of numerous local and international observers; apparently, political pressures for a speedy execution of Saddam Hussein outweighed the demand for a full legal proceeding concerning the *Anfal*.

Subsequently, in June 2007, Ali Hasan al-Majid was condemned to

death, together with two others, for genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. Following an appeal procedure, al-Majid was executed in January 2010.

International human rights organizations not only expressed doubts about the fairness of these trials; they also bemoaned the fact that Saddam was executed before he could properly be called to account for his role in the *Anfal* operations. The *Anfal* trials had many other flaws, not least the fact that they were conducted under continuing U.S. occupation, which technically rendered them void under international law. Although there are few if any outright denials of the *Anfal*'s genocidal character, the murderous violence that emerged in post-2003 Iraq has likewise tended to distract attention from the enormity of the Baath regime's crimes. Because of these and other flaws, there is a risk that the *Anfal* trials may be remembered internationally, and especially in the Arab world, as a case of victor's rather than victim's justice.

There has been significant international judicial corroboration of the genocide claim, however. In December 2005, the Dutch merchant Frans van Anraat, who sold chemicals to Iraq during the 1980s, was sentenced to 15 years imprisonment for complicity in war crimes, in particular the March 1988 attack against Halabja. Although van Anraat himself was cleared of complicity on charges of genocide, the court ruled that the Halabja attack did in fact constitute an act of genocide. The international juridical implications of this ruling may be substantial, given the obligations that genocide creates under international law. In 2014, the parliaments of a number of other European states, notably Sweden and Norway, recognized the Anfal as amounting to genocide.

Van Anraat's condemnation is only an isolated case, however; there are many other individuals, companies, and government officials in numerous countries who still have much to answer for. Thus, in *A Poisonous Affair*, Joost Hiltermann (2007) deplores the fact that the Reagan and Bush Sr. Administrations have never been called to account for their tacit approval, if not active encouragement, of Iraq's use of chemical weapons against both Iranian military and Iraqi civilians. The

full extent of international complicity in Saddam's numerous crimes is still far from adequately known, and may never be completely revealed; but to uncover this complicity in more detail, a sustained and concerted international effort will be necessary. At present, however, there appears to be little will or popular pressure to call those responsible to account.

Memory of the Anfal

In the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, public memory of the Anfal has seen significant developments. The full extent of the genocide did not become known until after the 1991 uprising and the capture of top secret Iraqi government documentation. Initially, some of the Kurdish parties were reluctant to qualify the operations as genocidal, possibly bearing in mind the likelihood of, or need for, an eventual reconciliation with Baghdad. This was to change, however, following the 2003 ousting of the Baath regime and the subsequent capture of figures like Saddam Hussein and Ali Hasan al-Majid. Since then, the Anfal has been carefully cultivated in Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) broadcasts and publications, and the topic of genocide against Kurds has entered high school curricula. Words like *enfâl kirdin* ('to anfalize'), *enfâlekan* ('Anfal victims'), and the English loan *jenosayd*, have gained currency in the Kurdish language as ways of referring to the operations.

Much of these writings follows what one may call a 'Holocaust paradigm,' i.e., a view of the Anfal as reflecting a policy to exterminate all Kurds, born from a generic Arab ethnic or racial hatred of or animosity against Kurds, rather than the highly centralized and secretive acts of a totalitarian regime. This discourse, it seems, primarily served to legitimize the KRG – and, by extension, its calls for Kurdish independence. As a result, it tended to gloss over the temporally, geographically and demographically restricted character of the operations, and complicating factors like the role of the Kurdish insurgence in the escalating logic of violence, and the ambiguous role, and fate, of the *jash*, or pro-government Kurdish irregulars.

As already suggested above, the Anfal operations had an importantly if not essentially gendered character. A number of recent studies have explored these dimensions of gender and gendered honor in the operations and their aftermath. In doing so, they have also published subaltern memories that may serve as a counternarrative to the official Kurdish nationalist discourse.

Seen in this light, the Anfal may also be interpreted as an assault on gendered Kurdish national honor. As Andrea Fischer-Tahir (2003, 2012) argues, the attacks on villages and subsequent imprisonment and mass executions of adult males were felt as an attempt to destroy Kurdish masculinity. Likewise, Karin Mlodoch (2012, 2015) has described how the fate of female Anfal survivors, living in a juridical limbo and in desperate economic circumstances, was perceived as jeopardizing Kurdish female honor. At present, it is unclear to what extent these gendered effects were a conscious and deliberate aspect of Baathist policies. Choman Hardi (2010) has equally stressed the need for a gendered view of the *Anfal* operations. She is particularly critical of the dominant representations of *Anfal* widows in the Kurdish media, which consistently depict them as mere victims with no life or agency of their own beyond mourning lost relatives. All too often, she notes, female survivors have been left to their own devices; but despite such difficulties female *Anfal* survivors have been "strong survivors," developing various strategies of coping with trauma, loss, poverty, and stigmatization.

A final comment about continuities between the 1988 Anfal operations and the 2014 genocide of Yezidis by IS, or the so-called 'Islamic State,' will conclude this chapter. In the summer of 2014, IS attacked and occupied Mosul, Sinjar, and Nineveh plain. Its murderous onslaught against Yezidis, Christians, Shabak, and other non-Sunni Muslim groups living there involves a logic, and tactics, similar to those of the Anfal. Apart from the generically Stalinist resort to terror as a tool of government, these tactics include the dividing of captive civilians by age and gender; the deliberate assault on the target group's sexual honor; and the encouraging of neighbors to join in looting. These similarities are probably not coincidental: former

officials of the Iraqi Baath's security apparatus are known to have constituted a substantial part, if not the core, of IS's upper echelons.

The 2014 IS offensive is only the most dramatic, and most widely publicized, part of a rather wider conflict. This conflict seems to reflect not only the destructive heritage of three decades of Baathist rule and of policy mistakes during the American occupation, but also a decentralization and de-etatization of political violence that has done much – and possibly irreversible – harm to the region's social fabric.

Eyewitness Accounts

To date, relatively little material about the *Anfal* in the way of eyewitness evidence is available in Western languages. Important works, like Ziyad Abdulrahman's *Tuni Merg* (*Dungeon of Death*), Shorsh Rasool's *Dewlety Iraq u Kurd* (*The Iraqi State and the Kurds*), and Arif Qurbany's four-volume *Shayethalakani Enfal* (Witnesses of the Anfal), are available only in Kurdish. The main source for published testimony is Human Right Watch's *Iraq's Crime of Genocide* (1995), from which Accounts 2 and 7 below have been taken. In the future, further testimony that has served as the basis for this report may be made public. Other eyewitness accounts appear in Kanan Makiya's *Cruelty and Silence* (1993), especially the lengthy (and harrowing) interview with Taimour Abdallah, at first believed to be the sole survivor of the execution squads (see Accounts 1 and 3; for a book-length interview with Abdallah, see Qurbany 2015). More recent studies that make extensive use of testimony from survivors (mostly female) are Choman Hardi's *Gendered Experiences of Genocide* (2010) and Karin Mlodoch's *The Limits of Trauma Discourse* (2015). Account 4 was recorded by the author and has not previously been published.

Account 1: The Chemical Attacks

This account, by Abdallah Abdel-Qadir al-Askari, who survived the attack on Guptepe (or "Goktepe" according to Human Rights Watch), provides a sense of the horrors of the chemical attacks. This is excerpted from Makiya's *Cruelty and Silence* (1993, p. 135). Note: for additional testimony from al-Askari, see Human Rights Watch's *Iraq's Crime of Genocide* (1995, pp. 118, 142, 154–155, 156–157).

On the evening of May 3 [1988] the situation in my village, Guptapa, was not normal. We had heard that the regime was preparing a chemical attack, but we didn't know when they would strike. It felt like there were unusual army maneuvers. Late in the afternoon with my brother-in-law and two friends—both teachers like myself—I climbed from our farm, which is on lower ground, to the highest point of the village. We wanted to see what was going on. Two inspection planes flew over. They threw out flares to determine the direction of the wind. Then another group of planes came, we think about 18 of them. The explosions were not very loud, which made me guess they were chemical bombs. When we raised our heads, we saw the sandy brown and grey clouds billowing upward. My background as a chemist left me in no doubt this was a chemical attack.

We climbed to the highest spot possible even though the wind was taking the gas away in the opposite direction. From there I shouted down to the people in the village: "This is a chemical attack! Try to escape! Come up the hill, come up here!" A lot of people did come to where we were and were saved. But a lot remained in the areas affected by the chemicals.

We discussed what to do. I thought we should wait 10 or 15 minutes, then go down. If we went at once, we too would be in danger and unable to help the others. But my friends wouldn't listen. So, we went down to the back of the village where the gases had not permeated and a lot of people were gathered. Some were very disturbed; one man shouted at me, "You have lost everybody; they are all killed. They have been bombing your house." This made me worried; I wanted to go back to my house but we hadn't waited long enough. Only three minutes had passed of the time I had fixed in my mind as the minimum.

The poison used in Guptapa in my opinion wasn't a single

gas; it was composed of several gases. The combination affects the muscles, making them rigid and inflexible. In two minutes it can kill a person.

Finally I could run to my house. It was 20 minutes before sunset. When I got there it was entirely dark, but I found a small flashlight. First I put on a gas mask to protect myself. Then I went to the shelter which I had prepared for just such an eventuality. My wife knew that this was where the family should hide in case of chemical attack. Nobody was there. I became really afraid—convinced that nobody had survived. I climbed up from the shelter to a cave nearby, thinking they might have taken refuge there. There was nobody there, either. But when I went to the small stream near our house, I found my mother. She had fallen by the river; her mouth was biting into the mud bank.

All the members of my family had been running toward this stream because I had told them that water is good against chemical weapons. By the time they reached the stream, a lot of them had fainted and fallen into the water. Most of them had drowned. I turned my mother over; she was dead. I wanted to kiss her but I knew that if did, the chemicals would be passed on. Even now I deeply regret not kissing my beloved mother.

I continued along the river. I found the body of my 9-year-old daughter hugging her cousin, who had also choked to death in the water. Then I found the dead body of another niece, with her father. I continued along the stream. I found a woman who wasn't from our family and heard a child groan under her. Turning the woman over, I found the child; the water had almost reached him. I took the boy's clothes off, took him inside, and bundled him up in other clothes.

Then I went around our house. In the space of 200 to 300 square meters I saw the bodies of dozens of people from

my family. Among them were my children, my brothers, my father, and my nieces and nephews. Some of them were still alive, but I couldn't tell one from the other. I was trying to see if the children were dead. At that point I lost my feelings. I didn't know who to cry for anymore and I didn't know who to go to first. I was all alone at night.

I saw one of my brothers: his head was tilted down a slope. My wife was still alive beside him, and my other brother was on the other side. My two daughters, the 6-month-old baby and the 4-year-old, were both dead. I tried to move them, to shake them. There was no response. They were both dead. I just knew they were dead.

My brothers and my wife had blood and vomit running from their noses and mouths. Their heads were tilted to one side. They were groaning. I couldn't do much, just clean the blood and vomit from their mouths and noses and try in every way to make them breathe again. I did artificial respiration on them and then I gave them two injections each. I also rubbed creams on my wife and two brothers. After injecting them, I had a feeling they were not going to die.

Our family has 40 members. I mean, it did. Now, of that big family we have only 15 left. Twenty-five of the beloved people of our family are dead. Among those were my five children.

Account 2: The Transit Camps

After being gathered at local camps, deportees were taken to centralized camps further south in Iraq. There, they were primarily in the hands of the security forces or the Party apparatus. This piece of testimony is excerpted from Human Rights Watch's *Iraq's Crime of Genocide* (1995, p. 147).

On the first morning, they separated the men into small

groups and beat them. Four soldiers would beat one captive. The other prisoners could see this. About 15 or 20 men were in each group that was taken a little way off to be kicked and beaten with sticks and [electric] cables. They were taken away in the early morning and returned in the afternoon. The soldiers did not gather the men by name, but just pointed, you, and you, and so on. They were *Amn* [security personnel] from Tikrit and Kirkuk—butchers, we know them. When one group of beaten men returned, they took another and beat them. That night, I was in a group of ten or twelve men that was taken out and blindfolded with our hands tied behind us. They took us in three or four cars to somewhere in Tikrit. We drove around all night, barely stopping. They asked me no questions. The captured men could not talk to one another. Everyone was thinking of his own destiny. Of the ten or twelve they took out that night, only five returned.

The next night, when I was back in the hall, Amn came and asked for men to volunteer for the war against Iran. Eighty men volunteered. But it was a lie; they disappeared. A committee was set up by Amn to process the prisoners, who were ordered to squat while the Amn agents took all their money and put it in a big sack. They also took all our documents. The Amn agents were shouting at us to scare us. "Bring weapons to kill them," said one. "They are poor, don't shoot them," said another. And another: "I wish we had killed all of them."

Later that night the Amn came back and took all the young men away. Only the elderly remained. The young men were taken away in Nissan buses, ten or more of them, each with a capacity of 45 people. Their documents had already been taken. They left nothing but the clothes on their backs.

Account 3: The Execution Sites

This account comes from the extraordinary testimony of Taimour Abdallah, who was taken to an execution site near the Saudi border but managed to escape, albeit wounded. Although he did not speak any Arabic, he found refuge with a Shiite Arab family, and eventually managed to return to the Kurdish-held north. This excerpt is taken from Makiya's *Cruelty and Silence* (1993, pp. 185, 191–192, 195).

Note: part of his testimony also appears in Gwynne Roberts' 1992 BBC television documentary, *The Road to Hell*, which was aired in the United States as *Saddam's Killing Fields*. See chapter 9 ("The Firing Squads") in Human Rights Watch's *Iraq's Crime of Genocide* (1995, pp. 160–174). See also the story of another *Anfal* survivor, Ako Izeddin Sayyid Ismael from Warani near Tuz Khormatu (*The Globe and Mail*, April 3, 2003) (full text at www.fas.harvard.edu/~irdp/reports/taimour.html).

Q: What happened when you reached the prison of Topzawa in Kirkuk?

A: When we arrived, they put women and children in one hall and the men in another.

Q: In which group did they put you?

A: I was with my mother and my sisters.

Q: Did you see your father again after being separated?

A: I saw him once more in Topzawa and then I didn't see him again.

Q: What was happening when you saw him?

A: They were taking off his clothes except for the underclothes. They manacled his hands and then they put

all the men in the lorries and drove them away.

Q: After that you never saw your father again?

A: No. [p. 185]

Q: What happened next?

A: . . . Just before reaching the place of the shooting, they first let us off the lorries and blindfolded us and gave us a sip of water. Then they made us go back inside. When we arrived, they opened the door, and I managed to slip aside my blindfold. I could see this pit in the ground surrounded by soldiers.

Q: Were your hands tied?

A: No.

Q: When they opened the door of the lorry, what was the first thing you saw?

A: The first thing I saw was the pits, dug and ready.

Q: . . . How many pits did you see?

A: It was night, but around us there were many.

Q: Four or five holes?

A: No, no, it was more.

Q: More than five, six, seven holes?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: Describe your pit.

A: The pit was like a tank dugout. They put us in that kind of a hole.

Q: They pushed you directly off the truck into the pit?

A: Yes.

Q: How high was it? One meter? Two meters? Could you stand up inside?

A: It was high.

Q: How high?

A: Up to the sash of a man.

Q: How many people were put inside?

A: One pit to every truck.

Q: And how many people were on a truck?

A: About 100 people.

Q: Was it just a massive hole?

A: It was rectangular.

Q: Was it cut very precisely by a machine?

A: By bulldozers as you would make a pit for a tank. [pp. 191–192]

Q: . . . Did you look into the soldier's face?

A: Yes.

Q: Did you see his eyes?

A: Yes.

Q: What did you see? What could you read in his eyes, in the expression on his face?

A: He was about to cry, but the other one shouted at him and told him to throw me back in the pit. He was obliged to throw me back.

Q: He cried!

A: He was about to cry.

Q: How far away was the officer who shouted?

A: He was close to him.

Q: The soldier who pushed you back into the hole, was he the one who shot you the second time?

A: Yes. This soldier shot me again after he received the order from the officer who was standing beside the pit. When he shot me the second time I was wounded here [he points] [p. 195].

Account 4: Deportations to Nuqrat al-Salman

This is the testimony of a 78-year-old man, originally from a village in the Qaradagh area, who had been resettled in Takiya *mujamma'a* near Chamchamal. From an interview conducted by Michiel Leezenberg, Takiya *mujamma'a*, spring 1992; previously unpublished.

In our village alone, six people were executed on the spot by government troops; in the neighboring village, they shot 18 people. When they took us away from our village, we were not allowed to take anything with us—not even cigarette paper. After half a year, about 500 of us, mostly the sick and the elderly, were allowed to return. Here I have the document from the camp, saying that I am allowed to go back together with my wife and daughter. At the bottom, they have added "We have done what we had been told to do" in handwriting. Of another family of nine from our village, only the parents and a young daughter have returned. There is no news about the other six. Nobody knows what has happened to the children. They say that the truck drivers who brought them away have all been shot. Nobody knows whether there are still people in the Nuqrat al-Salman camp today, but they cannot possibly be alive after four years in that heat. People were too weak, too tired, and too hungry even to bury their dead. I've heard that sometimes corpses were left lying exposed, only to be eaten by stray dogs.

Now, we are in the Takiya *mujamma'a*, but we have nothing to live from. There is one cow here, but it is not ours; we can only use its milk. We are too old to work now, and all our belongings have been stolen by the government. After the 1991 uprising, the government in reprisal stopped the supply of cheap foodstuffs here. We are still afraid of them; the day before yesterday, they shelled the *mujamma'a* with their artillery fire. They can come back anytime they like. The *peshmergas* can't defend us against their heavy arms and armored cars. Some people tried to return to their villages near the front lines, but their houses have been bombed again soon after they had been rebuilt.

Account 5: Targeting jash tribes

In several places, members of jash tribes, i.e., Kurdish pro-

government irregulars, were rounded up, deported, and in some cases, executed, even though they lived in areas nominally under government control. This fact provides further evidence that the Anfal was rather more than just a drastic counterinsurgency measure directed against rebel-held areas only. The fragment below comes from an interview with Dr. Behroz, in Sheikhmous (2015), pp. 45-46.

I started to investigate in Amara where I was stationed. I found out that some Kurdish women and children were kept in the town's schools. I visited a school right at the centre of the town. It was full of Kurdish women and children (no men). I advanced towards the policeman guarding the school and told him that I was looking for my sister and her family that were among the Anfal victims. He said that I could ask the prisoners in the school. I approached some women and asked them: who were they? And how long had they been there? One of the women answered that they were from the villages of Chiiman near Kirkuk and that they had been prisoners in that school for two years. When I asked about their men, they said that they were *jash* (members of the Kurdish collaborator militias). I was very surprised about the whole situation. Their men were collaborators and militiamen for their government and they with their children were imprisoned deportees after their village had been destroyed. […] A few months later, I went to Samawa, and had the fortune of meeting an old Arab acquaintance from the army who was a teacher by profession in the town. I asked for his help and we started investigating. We found another abandoned school in the heart of town that was full of Kurdish women and children as prisoners. Again they said that they were from the village of Shwan, and they had been there for more than a year, and a half, and that their men were government collaborators, *jash*. My Arab friend, Mirza, told me that some new Kurdish families had been

brought to Samawa but he wasn't sure.

Account 6 The experience of female survivors.

Many Anfal widows were left to their own devices, with their in-laws unable or unwilling to provide for them, and the regional government providing little or no financial support. In the absence of death warrants for their husbands, many were not legally declared widows, and unable to run the course of the mourning process. Many women were forced to do whatever work they could find. Often, the mere rumor of possible sexual violence against them became a stigma in itself. This fragment is excerpted from Karin Mlodoch's *The Limits of Trauma Discourse*, pp. 291-292.

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.

The women who worked at the checkpoint, they were really poor. Now the checkpoint is closed, but lots of them used to work here. 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. … 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.

Account 7: Ali Hasan al-Majid

This interview is excerpted from Human Rights Watch, *Iraq's Crime of Genocide* (1995, p. 254). Note: the tape is dated May 26, 1988, but according to Human Rights Watch it is more likely from 1987.

Jalal Talabani asked me to open a special channel of communication with him. That evening I went to Suleimaniyah and hit them with the special ammunition. That was my answer. We continued the deportations. I told the *mustashars* that they might say that they like their villages and that they won't leave. I said I cannot let your village stay because I will attack it with chemical weapons. Then you and your family will die. You must leave right now. Because I cannot tell you the same day that I am going to attack with chemical weapons. I will kill them all with chemical weapons! Who is going to say anything? The international community? Fuck them! The international community and those who listen to them..

This is my intention, and I want you to take serious note of it. As soon as we complete the deportations, we will start attacking them everywhere according to a systematic military plan. Even their strongholds. In our attacks we will take back one third or one half of what is under their control. If we can try to take two thirds, then we will surround them in a small pocket and attack them with chemical weapons. I will not attack them with chemical weapons for just one day, but I will continue to attack them with chemicals for 15 days. Then I will announce that

anyone who wishes to surrender with his gun will be allowed to do so. I will publish 1 million copies of this leaflet and distribute it in the North, in Kurdish, Sorani, Badinani and Arabic. I will not say it is from the Iraqi government. I will not let the government get involved. I will say it is from here [the Northern Bureau]. Anyone willing to come back is welcome, and those who do not return will be attacked again with new, destructive chemicals. I will not mention the name of the chemical because that is classified information. But I will say with new destructive weapons that will destroy you. So I will threaten them and motivate them to surrender. Then you will see that all the vehicles of God himself will not be enough to carry them all. I think and expect that they will be defeated. I swear that I am sure we will defeat them.

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