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## The Kurdish genocide in Iraq: the Security-Anfal and the Identity-Anfal

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### ABSTRACT

From February to September 1988, Iraqi Kurds were subjected to a genocidal operation by the Iraqi government, known as the Anfal operation. The operation lasted just over seven months but it had a devastating impact on most parts of rural Kurdistan in Iraq, resulting in the killing of thousands of Kurdish civilians. Most scholars have overlooked the multiple strategies, dimensions of and motivations for the operations and have mostly focused on and/or examined the military and genocidal dimensions of the operation. This article examines some of data and documents as well as secondary sources related to the Anfal operation directly or indirectly. It scrutinizes the pattern of casualties and disappearances of the Kurdish civilians during operations in order to identify and explain the motives of the Iraqi state. It argues that although the Iraqi government's objectives and intentions were multidimensional, two dimensions were the primary ones; the first one security and the second identity. In the Security-Anfal the intention was to overcome the Kurdish rebel groups; however, in the Identity-Anfal the key motive was the de-Kurdification of the Kirkuk province in order to Arabize the areas of Iraqi Kurdistan that were strategically significant economically and politically.

### KEYWORDS

Iraq; Kurdish genocide; Anfal; identity; ethnic cleansing

### The Anfal operation, securitization vs. de-Kurdification

Anfal is an Arabic term meaning 'the spoils' and is the name of the eighth *sura* (verse) of the Quran, where the name of the Anfal operation originated. This verse was allegedly revealed to the Prophet Muhammad in the wake of the battle of Badr in 624 AD. The name was used by the Iraqi government for a series of brutal military operations carried out against Kurdish rebel groups and civilians in the rural areas of Kurdistan in Iraq. These operations lasted just over seven months, from February 23, 1988 to September 6 of the same year and took place in eight stages. During the campaign, Iraqi Kurds in the targeted areas were subjected to killings and ethnic cleansing described as Kurdish genocide (Human Rights Watch, 1993). The Anfal operation was part of a large-scale and carefully coordinated military campaign that involved a range of actors, including the Iraqi Infantry and Mechanized divisions, the Iraqi Military Intelligence units, the Iraqi

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Air Force, the Kurdish Light Battalions known as *Fursan*, and the Iraqi Security Apparatuses (Hiltermann, 2008). According to Human Rights Watch (HRW) 100,000 Kurds were killed, many of them women and children. Their deaths did not come in the heat of battle, 'collateral damage' in the military euphemism, as HRW describe, but 'these Kurds were systematically put to death in large numbers on the orders of the central government in Baghdad' (Human Rights Watch, 1993, p. xiv).<sup>1</sup> Anfal is an under researched topic, the little available literature can be categorized into: first, the literature on the Anfal operation, and second, the literature on post-Anfal impact on the Kurdish society.

A report by the Human Rights Watch, published in 1993, is perhaps the most comprehensive and detailed study on the topic. The report is a narrative account aimed at investigating the Anfal operation to find facts and evidence in order to establish whether the Iraqi state committed actions amounting to genocide. The HRW used the official documents of the Iraqi state, forensic evidence, and interviews with hundreds of firsthand testimonies of witnesses who survived the campaign. The Human Rights Watch (1993, p. 15) states that for 'two decades, the Baath-led government had engaged in a campaign of Arabization of Kurdish regions'. To achieve this goal, the report suggests that Iraq planned to terminate the main obstacle to Arabization, namely the Kurdish armed resistance. To overcome this obstacle, the rebels, and all those deemed to be sympathizers, were therefore treated as Kurds who had to be wiped out.

However, there are two shortcomings in the HRW perspective. First, the entire Kurdish region in Iraq was not exposed to the Arabization process and not all Arabized areas were subjected to the Anfal operation. The Iraqi regime mostly, but not exclusively, targeted the Kurdish populated areas in the provinces of Diyala, Kirkuk, Salahaddin and Nineveh for Arabization, that is provinces bordering its self-designated provinces of the Kurdistan autonomous area. Only the Kirkuk province and its surroundings (designated in this article as the Kirkuk catchment) out of these regions faced systematic genocide during the Anfal operation. The rural areas of the provinces of Erbil, Suleimaniyeh and Duhok (within the Iraqi regime's designated Kurdistan autonomous areas) were not subject to the Arabization process though they were targets of the Anfal operation. Secondly, the HRW fails to distinguish between those Anfal stages that were designed to address security concerns and those to address identity (Arabization) concerns. Thus, the HRW viewed the Anfal operations as one campaign. These two shortcomings led the HRW to provide an incorrect account on the pattern of killings and disappearances. The HRW argues that the severity of the Anfal campaign and the high number of victims reflects the intensity of the rebel resistance. However, as it will be explained below, over 80 percent of victims of Anfal were from areas that experienced low intensity in terms of rebel resistance. In other words, the number of victims reflects the geostrategic, geoeconomic and geopolitical significance of the Kurdish populated areas and not the nature of Kurdish Peshmerga resistance.

Hiltermann (2008) states that the "bulk of the 'disappearances' were from the area of the third stage Anfal and those families that fled the area of the second stage Anfal and moved to the area of the third stage Anfal." He adds that "the systematic killing of all Kurds living in the countryside of this oil-bearing region [Kirkuk] ... [was carried out] in order to make it '*Koerden-rein*'" (Hiltermann, 2008). Despite this emphasis on the relation between mass-killing in this region and the Arabization policy, he fails to draw a distinction between the Identity Anfal and Security Anfal and support this with available data and statistics as this article has done. In fact, he views all stages of the Anfal operation,

including the systematic killing of Kurds in the Kirkuk catchment, within the context of security. Hiltermann puts forward two reasons to explain why Iraq undertook the Anfal campaign. First, 'Anfal' according to him 'was the regime's revenge for what it perceived as unforgivable treason', and the second reason given by Hiltermann (2008) is that the Iraqi regime wanted to dampen 'the Kurdish national question definitively within the boundaries of the Iraqi state'. Although the Iraqi regime wanted to de-Kurdify the Kirkuk region, as Hiltermann maintains, the main goal was not de-Kurdification itself from his perspective; rather it was Iraqi revenge and its termination the Kurdish resistance. Hence, from Hiltermann's perspective, the identity of Kirkuk was not the prize but the Kurdish nationalist movement based in the 'Kurdish village population.'

Leezenberg (2012, p. 397) also outlines two explanations for the mass-killings during the Anfal operation, that can be used to establish an argument for the Identity Anfal. Firstly, he correctly states that, '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'. However, he plays down the identity aspect of Anfal by suggesting that 'the operations primarily targeted the Kurdish civilian population living in rural areas not under Iraqi government control'. These mass-killings of 'local civilian population,' according to him, were 'for no reason other than their living in the wrong place' (Leezenberg, 2012, p. 395). In other words, if they were not in areas outside Iraqi control and not in the wrong place, they would not have faced these measures. Secondly, he highlights the geographic distribution of killed and disappeared women and children. He notes that 'only in the operations in the Kirkuk region do women and children appear to have been executed.' Again, he undermines the identity aspects of Anfal, including the execution of women and children in the Kirkuk region, by connecting these measures to issues of resistance and/or the status of local commanders. He argues that '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' (Leezenberg, 2012, p. 397).

A seminal work by Liam Anderson and Gareth Stansfield titled *Crisis in Kirkuk: The Ethnopolitics of Conflict and Compromise* though discusses the issue of Kirkuk and its implications on the Kurdish question in Iraq in detail but it does not deliberate the Kirkuk crisis in the context of the Anfal operation. The book mentions the Anfal several times but in relation to topics unrelated to the Identity Anfal and/or Security Anfal (Anderson & Stansfield, 2009, p. 30, 41, 52). In addition, the book discusses the systematic process of Arabization but, again, not in the context of the Anfal operation (see Anderson & Stansfield, 2009, p. 64).

The second category of literature focuses on the consequences of Anfal for Kurdish society. This group of scholars focuses less on the operations themselves and more on their consequences for survivors of Anfal. Hardi (2016), for example, highlights a gendered approach to the Anfal operation. Her work focuses on the long-term consequences of the Anfal operation on the social status of the women captured and imprisoned during the operation. She brings to light the women's experiences and narratives to the Kurdish collective memory of the Anfal. Hardi also examines how women's susceptibility to violence, including sexual violence during the Anfal operation combined with the post-Anfal difficulties that they faced, such as difficulties associated with the destruction of the family structure and farming communities, poverty and the fate of children. Similarly,

Mlodoch (2014) explores the post-Anfal impact on the women who were victims of this operation. Her research focuses on the psychosocial situation of women survivors in the Kirkuk region. It also investigates their struggle for truth, justice, and acknowledgement. On the other hand, Fischer-Tahir (2012) investigates narratives of the Anfal operation from the perspective of the Kurdish armed groups, namely the Peshmerga, mostly men. She conducted interviews with lower-ranking Peshmerga and compares their narrative on the Anfal with memoirs of leading Peshmerga commanders. By doing so, Fischer-Tahir is not aiming at understanding the Anfal itself, but rather to highlight differences in the two investigated groups in terms of dealing with the experience of defeat and harmed masculinity. Finally, Baser and Toivanen (2017) scrutinize the question of how Anfal has reshaped Kurdish politics. They examine how the Anfal was invested in by Kurdish politicians for the purpose of Kurdish nation-building and how the Anfal relates to the question of Kurdish claim for self-rule and an independent state. Generally speaking, this group of scholars do not focus on the Anfal itself, but rather their focus is on the implications of the Anfal for the victims and wider Kurdish society. Therefore, they have not addressed the issue of Identity and Security Anfals.

As for the Kurdish observers and scholars who published in Kurdish, one can safely argue that most of them have presented the military campaign of Anfal as being one Anfal with a single motive, namely the genocide of Iraqi Kurds. Kurdish literature on the Anfal operation has failed to recognize the two forms of Anfal (e.g. Abdul Rahman, 1995; Abdulla, 2003; Dibegeyi, 2011; Dzayi, 2001; Mala Shakhi, 2007a, 2007b). In this article, two forms of Anfal are identified, namely the Security-Anfal and the Identity-Anfal. Looking at the Anfal operation from this perspective challenges the existing understanding of seeing the Anfal operation as a single form with a single objective.

In a nutshell, what differentiates this study is that it goes beyond the claim of a relationship between the Arabization (or de-Kurdification) of the Kirkuk province to prove it by examining the available data and the patterns of disappearance during the various stages of the Anfal operation. In doing so, the article argues that the main aim of the Anfal operation was to eliminate the Kurdish insurgency, named here as the Security Anfal, and the de-Kurdification of the Kirkuk province, defined in this article as the Identity Anfal. Having said that, it should be mentioned that there were geopolitical and geo-economic strategies and objectives behind the Anfal operation in order to control the natural resources in the Kurdish populated areas within Iraq. Furthermore, this study seeks to question the statist perspective that views the Kurdish question in Iraq through the lens of security. The manifestation of this statist view has been reflected in some of the academic studies mentioned above. In contrast, this article attempts to shed light on the identity dimension of the actions taken by the Iraqi regime against the Kurds and the Kurdish national movement by using the Anfal operation as a case study.

### **The Baath identity politics and the Kurds in Iraq**

To assess how and why the Iraqi government started its genocidal operation against the Kurds, it is necessary first to assess and evaluate the powers given to Ali Hassan Al-Majid by the Iraqi Revolutionary Command Council (RCC), the highest decision-making body of the state during the reign of the Arab Baath Socialist Party (the Baath) that ruled Iraq from 1968 to 2003 under the leadership of Saddam Hussein who was the Vice President until

1979 and the President until 2003 when he was ousted by the United States of America (see below).

This article argues that while the Security-Anfal was a reactive process, the Identity-Anfal was a proactive procedure. By and large, the Kurdish national movement was dealt with and perceived by the Iraqi government as a security issue; however, Kirkuk's demography and identity were perceived as a threat to the Arab national identity of the Iraqi state as imagined by the Baathists. Hence, terminating the Kurdish nationalist movement was the aim of the Security-Anfal and changing Kirkuk's demographic identity was the aim of the Identity-Anfal.

According to the 1947 Baath constitution 'the Arab homeland is for Arabs.' The constitution defined the Arab homeland as the land that stretched from the Torus Mountains and those of Bakhtiari Mountain to Ethiopia Mountains all the way to the Atlantic Ocean and Mediterranean Sea. The Baath asserted that whoever 'speaks Arabic and lives on Arab territory' was considered an Arab (Arab Baath Socialist Party, 1947, Article 7 and 10). Based on this description and definition, the land regarded by the Kurds as their ancestral homeland (Kurdistan) was also claimed by the Baath as part of the Arab homeland and, since the Kurds already inhabited these territories, they were considered to be Arabs. Hence, any opposition to such claims (e.g. by Kurds) was seen by the Baathists as obstacles to the Arab nationalist project and needed to be removed.

In 1955, the founder of the Baath Party, Michel Aflaq suggested that imperialism was behind the ethnic demands of Kurds, Assyrians, and Berbers (see Al-Fkaiki, 1993, p. 295). The Baath Constitution states that Arabism is 'the only link that exists in the Arab State' and it suggests that all other ethnic groups must be assimilated in 'one crucible of one Nation [Arab]'. If non-Arab ethnic groups could not be assimilated and if they 'called for or joined a racist [ethnic] block against the Arabs' then as the Baath Constitution maintained they 'shall be evicted' from the Arab homeland (Arab Baath Socialist Party, 1947, Article 11 and 15). From the Baathists' perspective any national liberation movement, be Kurds or Berbers, were tantamount for racist movements and agents of imperialism, as well as source of incitement. This was basically the ideological justification behind the Iraqi regime's anti-Kurds campaigns, such as the Arabization and the Anfal genocidal operation.

The Baath firmly believed in remaking Iraqi society in its own image. As a result, Iraq's identity reflected the visions and ambitions of only the Arab nationalists. When the Baathists assumed power in 1968, war was raging in Kurdistan between the Kurdish rebels and the Iraqi Army. After two years of fighting, Kurdish and Baath leaders signed what is known as the 11 March Manifesto, a framework for Kurdish autonomy to be implemented within four years (for the full text of the Manifesto see Gunter, 1992, pp. 15–16). However, any hope of implementing the manifesto soon vanished as, shortly after the signing, the regime resumed its policy of Arabization. Eventually, Baghdad unilaterally decreed an autonomy status for Kurdistan, which excluded strategic places such as Kirkuk but this government proposal was rejected by the Kurds. In March of 1974, the conflict resumed, and fighting lasted for a year until the Kurdish rebellion crumbled. After the collapse of the rebellion, the regime commenced a comprehensive program of Arabization, internal displacement, and deportation. It specifically targeted the oil-rich regions in Kirkuk, hoping to create an Iraq as it had been imagined by the Baathists and as described in the Baath Constitution (see above).

Demographic changes brought about by the internal displacement of the Kurds and replacing them with Arabs was the centerpiece of the Arabization policy. Out of an area of 86000 square kilometers of Iraqi Kurdistan, 36684 square kilometers (42.66 percent) was subject to the policy of Arabization (Mina, 1999, p. 149). Kirkuk province was subjected to another calculated policy of 'cut and fill.' In this way, in 1976, four mainly Kurdish districts of Chamchamal, Kalar, Tuzkhormatu and Kifri were excised from the Kirkuk province and attached to other surrounding provinces (*Al-Waqai' al-Iraqiya*, December 15, 1975).<sup>2</sup> In total, 10,300 square kilometers (50.60 percent) of Kirkuk's 20,355 square kilometers were reallocated to other provinces. The aim of all these changes was to Arabize Kirkuk by decreasing its concentration of Kurds (Haddad et al., 2006, pp. 13–19).

More importantly, in 1987 after the national census, the regime perhaps realized that the Kurdish rate of population growth was higher than the Arab rate as Kurds were hardly involved in direct fighting against Iran because most military service-aged Kurds either declined to join the Iraqi Army or were deserters. According to Saddam Hussein, in the first years of the war, about 45,000 Kurdish soldiers deserted. As a consequence, the government decided to release the majority of Kurdish servicemen from the army and station the rest away from the battle zones. Hence, it introduced a scheme whereby nearly 250,000 Kurdish infantry could serve in special Light Battalions (*al-Afwaj al-Khafifa*) in the Kurdish region far away from the Iraq-Iran active battle zones (Human Rights Watch, 1993, pp. 29–30).

By the mid-1980s, guerrilla activities had reached unprecedented levels, and the regime's ability to contain the Kurdish population had deteriorated. Despite internal displacement and the ensuing colonization, the Kurdish national movement survived. Against this backdrop, another stage of Arabization began in early 1987, culminating in the infamous Anfal operation of 1988. The regime believed that before the end of the Iraq-Iran war it had to eliminate the Kurdish insurgency and thus conducted the planned genocidal Anfal operation hoping that it could blend this operation into the ongoing war with Iran in order to avoid being accused of crimes against humanity.

To address the arguments presented in this article the authors highlight the similarities and differences of the stages of the Anfal operation, including patterns of killing and military measures and procedures. It also examines the reasons behind the way the Iraqi government treated the targeted areas and populations differently. It also scrutinizes the policies and methods adopted during the eight stages of Anfal in order to test the assumptions and arguments presented here. Finally, the article presents fresh content by focusing more on the process and outcome of the eight stages of Anfal operation. Thus, the reader is presented with new arguments and a more nuanced view from existing understandings in the literature.

### **Al-Majid's life and death power**

The first step in preparations for the Anfal operation by the Iraqi state was the appointment of Ali Hassan Al-Majid (1941–2010) as the Secretary General of the Northern Bureau for the Baath Party on March 29, 1987. Before this appointment, Al-Majid headed several security agencies. He was also the third ranking Baath official after Saddam Hussein, the Secretary General of the Baath Party and the Izzat al-Durri, Saddam's deputy. Al-Majid, who was Saddam's cousin by blood, later, became Minister

of the Interior and then Governor of Kuwait during the brief military occupation in 1990–1991. He also has served as Minister of Defense in 1990s. The decree which authorized Al-Majid's appointment and powers was issued by the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC), the highest legislative power in Iraq during the Baath era (1968–2003). This decree gave Al-Majid extraordinary powers over all state, party, military and security institutions and agencies. According to the RCC's decree, Al-Majid's 'decisions shall be mandatory for all state agencies, be they military, civilian and security' (for a copy of the decree see Human Rights Watch, 1994a, pp. 64–67).

The decree made Al-Majid the supreme commander, and effective overlord, of all aspects of the Anfal. Hence, his power was comparable, at least in Iraqi Kurdistan, to that of Saddam Hussein, the then-president of Iraq. Since 1979, when Saddam Hussein (1937–2006) ousted Ahmed Hassan Al-Bakr from the position of President of Iraq and appointed himself in place as well as becoming President of the RCC, he enjoyed unrivaled power. Saddam's presidential decrees, directives, instructions, and guidelines to state agencies were synonymous with laws. His speeches were later accorded the same authority (*Al-Waqai' al-Iraqiya*, February 1, 1993, p. 38.). The slogan, 'if Saddam said, Iraq said,' which was on everybody's lips, indeed meant that if Saddam decided anything, then Iraq should follow his orders (Kirmanj, 2013, p. 138). Al-Majid exercised the powers enjoyed by Saddam in Iraqi Kurdistan, including power over life and death.

### Security-Anfal and Identity-Anfal

Al-Majid used his 'power over life and death' to achieve two goals. In his own words, he sought 'to solve the Kurdish problem and slaughter the saboteurs [Peshmergas, the Kurdish guerrilla fighters]' (Human Rights Watch, 1993, p. 58, 345). The first goal was to terminate once and for all the armed Kurdish national movement, which was revitalized in the 1980s, and in control of large areas in the rural areas of Iraqi Kurdistan. The second goal was to complete the process of Arabization that started in 1963 by changing the ethnic demography of the oil-rich region of Kirkuk. To achieve the first goal, Al-Majid set out to demolish the bases of Peshmerga forces through attacking Kurdish rebel bases and the depopulation of rural Kurdistan. The second goal was to be accomplished through Arabization and/or de-Kurdification of Kirkuk city and its surroundings.

Iraqi governments, in particular the Baath regime, looked at the Kurdish question through the prism of security. In other words, Iraqi authorities securitized the Kurdish question as by endeavoring to achieve their political, cultural and linguistic rights the Kurdish people and the Kurdish national movement were perceived as threats to Iraqi national unity and, thereby, its national interest and national security. In this context, in the official Iraqi literature, protecting security and stability was synonymous with the suppression of Kurdish national rights and cracking down on the Kurdish national movement. Furthermore, one of the ramifications of the Iraqi nationhood project was the criminalization of Kurdish nationalism and the portrayal of the Kurdish question as a security matter within the domestic framework.

Similarly, in the international context, the dominant discourse of the Iraqi state involved accusing the Kurdish political opposition groups of being in a diabolical alliance with enemies of the Arab nation, namely imperialism, Zionism and Iran (Arab Baath Socialist Party, 1980a, 1980b, 1983, 1988; Aflaq, 1987, p. 142). The Iraqi mainstream media and



official discourse often refrained from identifying or mentioning the Kurdish political parties or leaders by name. Whenever the Kurdish question was mentioned in Iraqi state discourse, Kurdish political parties in general and the groups who were part of Kurdish national movement in particular were portrayed as traitors, agents of imperialism, plotters, conspirators, collaborators with the enemy, criminals, and saboteurs. The areas controlled by Kurdish national movement were described as 'pocket[s] of foreign agents', 'the other Israel', 'the second Israel', and/or 'the offspring of treachery' (See al-Al-Barak, 1989, p. 48; al-Al-Ghamrawi, 1967, p. 394; al-Al-Taghalubi, 1967; al-Hayat March 16, 1970; al-Jamhuriya, September 13, 1983; Hawkari, March 24, 1988, April 28, 1988, August 18, 1988; al-Iraq, March 18, 1993). Thus, the Iraqi representation of Kurdish nationalism as a security issue that threatened the Iraqi state was used to legitimize and justify state-sponsored military violence against the Kurds.

The process of demographic change and Arabization of Kirkuk started with the British decision to annex Southern Kurdistan (the Ottoman Vilayat of Mosul) to Iraq in the early 1920s. This process was motivated by oil prospects. For Iraq, control of Kirkuk equated to control over Kirkuk's gigantic oilfields of Baba Gurgur, Avana, Bay Hassan and Jabal Jambur. To keep control of these oilfield revenues under the Iraqi government, successive Iraqi governments attempted to Arabize the oil rich areas of Iraqi Kurdistan. They believed that this only could be achieved through what they saw as the Arab future of the city. To fulfil this goal, Iraq embarked upon a comprehensive campaign aimed at changing the demographic characteristic of Kirkuk city and its surroundings, designated as Kirkuk catchment here in this article (see [Map 1](#)), through the combined policies of Arabization and de-Kurdification.

Arabization policies were carefully engineered and implemented in several stages (Mina, 1999; Muhammad et al., 2004). The Arabization and de-Kurdification of Kirkuk catchment took another turn in the wake of the autonomy decree in March 1970. The March Agreement of 1970 provided a roadmap for implementing Kurdish autonomy within four years. However, a stalemate resulted between Iraq and the Kurds over Kirkuk. In the 1970s, the Kurds rejected the unilateral Iraqi government demarcation of the borders of the Kurdish autonomous area, which excluded Kirkuk province and other oil-rich areas as well as some other areas designated by the Iraqi government as strategic zones. Consequently, intense fighting ensued between the government and the Kurds. The fighting lasted a year (from March 1974 to March 1975) as the Iraqi government crushed the Kurdish rebellion.

Soon after the collapse of the Kurdish revolt, the Iraqi regime commenced a comprehensive program of Arabization through internal displacement and deportation of Kurds from the oil-producing areas of Kirkuk. Kirkuk province in particular was subjected to another calculated policy of 'cut and fill.' For example, two Kurdish districts (Chamchamal and Kalar) were excised from the province and attached to Suleimaniyeh province within the Kurdish autonomous area; another district (Tuzkhurmatu) was excised and attached to Salah al-Din province outside the Kurdistan autonomous areas; and another district (Kifri) was linked to the Diyala province also outside the autonomous areas (*Al-Waqai' al-Iraqiya*, December 15, 1975). Additionally, the Iraqi government detached and Arabized the sub-district of Sargaran from Erbil province in 1975 and located it within Kirkuk province. In 1987, the Arab sub-district of al-Zab was separated from Nineveh province and attached to Kirkuk province (Haddad et al., 2006, pp. 13–19). The intention was



**Map 1.** Anfal operation stages and catchments. The map was developed by Kami Rostami for the sake of this article.

to Arabize Kirkuk by decreasing its concentration of Kurds. Furthermore, incentives were given to the Arab settlers to move and settle in Kirkuk to increase the concentration of Arabs.

The Anfal operation can be described as a logical extension of nearly three decades of Arabization policies in the Kurdistan region by successive Iraqi governments. There are reports that on the day of Al-Majid’s appointment as the Secretary General of the Northern Bureau for the Arab Baath Socialist Party, he told Saddam: *‘lo albis yashmakh lo alabishum kulhum ‘ug’* ([I will go to the North] either wearing the Kurdish turban or make them all [the Kurds] wear Arabic headbands). In the late 1980s, these words were on people’s lips. Whether true or false, the general public took it as true because Al-Majid’s activities confirmed the broadly circulated report. Moreover, Al-Majid’s threat says a great deal about the motivations and intentions of the Iraqi regime, which was to melt the Kurds into the Arabic ethnic pot.

In order to implement his vision, al-Majid made the Kirkuk catchment the main target of the Anfal operation. On April 15, 1989, several months after the Anfal operation, Al-Majid maintained that one of its primary objectives was the de-Kurdification of Kirkuk, stating:

I would like to speak about two points: one, Arabization; and two, the shared zones between the Arab lands and the Autonomous Region. The point that we are talking about is Kirkuk. When I came, the Arabs and Turkmen were not more than 50 percent of the total population of Kirkuk. Despite everything, I spent sixty million [Iraqi] dinars until we reached the present situation. Now it is clear. For your information, the Arabs who were brought to Kirkuk didn't raise the percentage to sixty percent. Then we issued directives. I prohibited the Kurds from working in Kirkuk [city], the neighborhoods [surroundings] and the villages around it. (Human Rights Watch, 1993, p. 353)

Considering the above discussion, it is safe to assume that the Anfal operation had two main dimensions. The first was aimed at the termination of the Kurdish nationalist movement (saboteurs as labeled by the Iraqi government and its documents). The second was the Arabization and the de-Kurdification of the Kirkuk catchment. Kurdish nationalism and Kurdish armed movements were perceived and dealt with by the Iraqi state as a security issue. Therefore, the stages of the Anfal operation that were aimed at the elimination of the Kurdish nationalist movements, in particular its armed-wing, are categorized in this article as the Security-Anfal. However, as Kirkuk's demography and identity were perceived by the Iraqi authorities as an ethno-national identity issue, the stages of Anfal that aimed at changing the ethnic composition of Kirkuk catchment are categorized here as the Identity-Anfal.

This article draws on the valuable data presented in Human Rights Watch seminal work *Genocide in Iraq: The Anfal campaigns Against the Kurds* which provides an overview of the intensity of resistance, patterns of population movement, and measures taken by the Iraqi military during the various stages of Anfal. As for the number of casualties and people who disappeared, the article adopts the data and figures of HRW as well as that of Zaid Abdul Rahman's *Death Crematorium*, the latter being based on a comprehensive survey conducted by the Committee for the Defense of Anfal Victims' Rights in the early 1990s. Abdul Rahman's work covered the most severely affected areas of the second, third, and fourth stages of the Anfal, categorized as Identity-Anfal in this article. The authors believe that the number of people who disappeared is actually higher, especially in the Kirkuk catchment area. These figures, however, offer a reasonable indication of the pattern of disappearances. [Table 1](#) shows a compilation of data disaggregated according to each stage of the Anfal campaigns.

### **Anfal, besieged areas and targeted populations**

The Security-Anfal included the first, fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth stages of the Anfal operation that targeted civilians and permanent Peshmerga bases in villages located in Peshmerga-held territories in the highlands and mountains of the Erbil, Suleimaniyeh and Duhok catchments. However, the Identity-Anfal, which included the second, third and fourth stages of the Anfal operation, targeted civilians and temporary Peshmerga bases in villages in Peshmerga-held territories on the planes of the Kirkuk catchment (see [Map 1](#) and [Table 1](#)). In other words, the Security-Anfal was directed against what was designated by the Iraq government in 1974 as the Autonomous Region of Kurdistan and the Identity-Anfal directed against Kurdish populated areas within or outside the Autonomous Region of Kurdistan in Kirkuk, Suleimaniyeh and Erbil provinces with very close proximity to the borders of the Kirkuk province, described in this article as the Kirkuk catchment.

**Table 1.** Security-Anfal and Identity-Anfal.

	Anfal stages & Targeted Areas		Date in 1988 (days)	Villages affected <sup>(b)</sup>	Casualties <sup>(ii)</sup>	Resistance Level	Disappeared (Anfalized)	Percentage each Stage	Percentage each Anfal
<b>Security-Anfal</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> Suleimaniyeh Catchment	Sergalou & Bergalou	Feb 23 – Mar 19 (27)	240	460	Strong	9 <sup>(c)</sup>	0.01	11.96
	5 <sup>th</sup> , 6 <sup>th</sup> , & 7 <sup>th</sup> Erbil Catchment	Shaqlawa & Rawanduz	May 15 – Aug 26 (91)	52	55	Very strong	150 <sup>(c)</sup>	0.22	
	8 <sup>th</sup> Dohuk Catchment	Badinan	Aug 25 – Sept 6 (13)	310	321	Very low	8,000 <sup>(c)</sup>	11.73	
<b>Identity-Anfal</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> , 3 <sup>rd</sup> & 4 <sup>th</sup> Kirkuk Catchment	Qaradagh	Mar 22 – Apr 1 (11)		168	Low	8,835 <sup>(d)</sup>	12.95	88.04
		Garmian	Apr 7 – Apr 20 (13)	500 + 4 sd <sup>(a)</sup>	43	Modest	44,035 <sup>(d)</sup>	64.54	
		Khalkhalan	May 3 – May 8 (5)	200	300	Low	7,201 <sup>(d)</sup>	10.55	
<b>Total</b>				1,302 + 4 sd	1,347		68,230	100.00	100.00

Sources: Abdul Rahman (1995, p. 124), Human Rights Watch (1993), Mala Shakhi (2007a, p. 12, 2007b, p. 11), and Dzayi (2001, pp. 84–156).

Notes: a. sd denotes sub-district; b. Includes civilian and Peshmerga casualties; c. Figures taken from Human Rights Watch (1993) and Makiya (1993, p. 152); d. Figures taken from Abdul Rahman (1995, p. 124).

While the areas targeted during the Identity-Anfal were mostly outside the Kurdistan Autonomous Region, some areas were part of the Autonomous Region, such as the Chamchamal district. Nevertheless, for three reasons these areas cannot be separated from the Kirkuk catchment. First, Chamchamal and Tuzkhurmatu districts, both heavily targeted during the Anfal operation, were part of Kirkuk province until 1975 when the former was annexed to Suleimaniyeh province and the latter to the newly created province of Salah al-Din, a move that was part of the Arabization policies of the Iraqi government as discussed above. Second, these areas were traditionally, culturally, economically and geopolitically an extension of the Kirkuk catchment. Third, the majority of villagers who were captured and disappeared during the second stage of Anfal that targeted the northern and eastern regions of Chamchamal and beyond were those who had fled southwards only to be captured in the villages located within the Kirkuk catchment (Human Rights Watch, 1993, pp. 121–123; Hiltermann, 2008, pp. 6–7).

It has to be noted that in the late 1980s, just before the Anfal operation, most of rural Kurdistan was either under the direct control of Peshmerga forces or under their influence. The Kurdish nationalists labeled these areas as ‘liberated territories’. However, after the appointment of Al-Majid, the Iraqi government designated ‘the villages in which the saboteurs [Peshmergas]’ are found as ‘prohibited for security reasons.’ Accordingly, ‘the presence of human beings and animals’ was entirely ‘prohibited in these areas’ (Human Rights Watch, 1994a, p. 68).

In contrast to the hard-to-access terrains of permanently controlled Peshmerga areas in the highlands of Kurdistan, which were targeted during the first, fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth stages of the Anfal campaigns, the Iraqi troops took advantage of much more accessible planes during the second, third and fourth stages of Anfal operation. Through systematic campaigns of mass killing, disappearance and other genocidal practices, the territorial identity of the area and the Kurdish population residing there were the aim and objective of these stages, categorized here as the Identity-Anfal. These areas were mostly located along major roads and around cities and townships.

### **Anfal, aims and motivations**

As mentioned, the Security-Anfal was aimed at the eradication of the Kurdish rebellions and, by extension, the Kurdish national movement. Meanwhile, the Identity-Anfal intended to eliminate the Kurdish existence in the Kirkuk catchment. Accordingly, the objectives of the Security-Anfal were different than those of the Identity-Anfal. The Security-Anfal can be considered as a counterinsurgency operation that was designed and implemented to eliminate the perceived threat of the Kurdish national movement through killing and/or forcing the Kurdish rebels to leave their bases in rural Kurdistan, and then depopulate and destroy the villages. Furthermore, the areas subjected to the Security-Anfal were perceived by the Iraqi government to be militarily and politically uncontrollable areas of rural Kurdistan as they were largely governed by the Peshmerga forces. The Iraqi government, thus, adopted a scorched earth strategy in these areas because the rural areas had served as bases for the Kurdish guerrillas for decades.

Indeed, following the collapse of the Kurdish rebellion in 1975, the Iraqi army entered this region for the first time in 1975 since 1961. Despite its triumph and the deployment of tens of thousands of security forces in the region, the Iraqi state still failed to govern this

region as the Peshmerga activities had reached unprecedented levels by the mid-1980s. Therefore, from central governments' perspective, removing Kurds from the rural areas and resettling them in concentrations camps (known locally as *mujama'at*, collective centers) built around the major cities and district centers under strict Iraqi military control was the only solution, and this is precisely what the regime continued to do under the command of Al-Majid.

The Security-Anfal started with the designation of most of the rural areas of Kurdistan as 'prohibited areas'. The inhabitants of these prohibited areas were given a choice: either returning to what the regime defined as 'national ranks', in other words, 'abandon their homes and livelihoods and accept compulsory relocation in a squalid camp [collective centers] under the eye of the security forces' as described by Human Rights Watch, or they could lose their Iraqi citizenship or being regarded without exception as 'deserters' (Human Rights Watch, 1993, p. 10). The latter basically meant death as in the mid-1980s the RCC imposed the death penalty on deserters (*Al-Waqai' al-Iraqiya*, January 2, 1984; February 1, 1988).

The Iraqi census of October 1987 was set as the final date for the villagers to make up their minds. The prohibited areas were effectively excluded from the proposed census, which was conducted on October 17, 1987. Consequently, the citizens residing in the 'prohibited areas' who failed to participate in the census, were ultimately stripped of their Iraqi citizenship. Four months after the final date to return, in February 1988, the Anfal operation began. By the end of the operations in September of the same year, some 90 percent of Kurdish villages (some 4,500 out of 5,000) and 80–85 percent of the infrastructure in rural Kurdistan had been destroyed (Gunter, 1994, p. 148; Kirmanj, 2013, p. 258).

The Identity-Anfal, however, was aimed at the termination of all aspects of Kurdish life, language, culture and identity in the areas surrounding the city of Kirkuk that functioned as a catchment for the city. The pattern of civilian disappearances during the second stage of the Anfal operation sheds more light on Iraq's strategic objective which was the creation of a non-Kurdish buffer zone around the oil city of Kirkuk as part of the move to fully annex the wealthy areas of Kurdistan (see sections below).

The comprehensive nature of all the Anfal campaigns makes it clear that the regime was committed to de-Kurdifying the Kirkuk region, particularly the areas bordering the already Arabized regions of the south-west and south-east of the city. The Kurdish tribes of Roghzayi and Daoudi that inhabited the border areas with the Arabs were the worst hit by the Anfal operation as entire populations of the areas they inhabited vanished, including significant numbers of women and children (Human Rights Watch, 1993, p. 147, 170). A number of features and/or elements in the Identity-Anfal were similar to the Security-Anfal, including the destruction of villages and towns in the targeted areas. However, in the Identity-Anfal the prevalent pattern was rounding up the entire Kurdish population within the targeted areas and detaining them in concentration centers, followed by mass murder and the burying of victims in mass graves scattered around Iraq.

It is relevant to enquire as to why specific areas were singled out for extermination during the Identity-Anfal. The answer lies in that, historically, the key issue of disagreement between the Kurdish leadership and the Iraqi authorities revolved around the fate of Kirkuk (Rafaat, 2008, pp. 251–266). The Kurds have always claimed that Kirkuk and its surrounding areas have been historically part of Kurdistan and should be included in any new autonomous or federal region of Kurdistan. However, successive Iraqi governments have

feared that Kirkuk's inclusion in Kurdistan would lead to its separation from Iraq. In an interview in the late 1990s, Tariq Aziz, former Iraqi Foreign Minister, asserted that 'Kirkuk must not be a part of the autonomous area because if it is incorporated it will be the first stage for [Kurdish] secession' (Na'na', 2000, p. 163). The Iraqi government believed that for the Kurds to abandon Kirkuk and its surrounding oil-rich areas they needed to be driven out of it. The Identity-Anfal was designed and implemented to serve this purpose.

### **Anfal, military measures**

During the Anfal campaigns, the Iraqi regime by all accounts 'committed a panoply of war crimes, together with crimes against humanity and genocide' (Human Rights Watch, 1993, p. xiv). This was done by any means possible disregarding international laws, institutional rules, morals, regulations, possible repercussions or public opinion. In a meeting with the Northern Bureau members and directors of the Baath Party on May 26, 1987, Al-Majid openly dismissed international law and the international community as being of concern to the regime. He stated 'Who is going to say anything? The international community? F... the international community and those who listen to them' (Human Rights Watch, 1993, Appendix A, p. 349).

On February 23, 1988 the first of the eight stages of Anfal began. Each stage started with widespread and indiscriminate use of chemical weapons against civilians and Peshmerga forces in the targeted areas. After intense shelling, including the use of chemical weapons and the ousting of Peshmerga forces, the next step was the systematic destruction of entire villages including infrastructure, farms and natural spring water holes (Human Rights Watch, 1993, p. 12; Hiltermann, 2008, p. 153). During the eight stages of the Anfal operations, nearly one million villagers were displaced or forced to flee to Iran or Turkey. Those who could not make it to Iran and Turkey were forcefully removed from their villages to be resettled in one of the collective centers built on the main highways or near the major cities or towns (Rafaat, 2018, pp. 134–137). Generally speaking, the use of military brutality in both types of Anfal operation (Security-Anfal and Identity-Anfal) was similar, as the Iraqi military and the Baath Party apparatuses used terror tactics including chemical weapons to capture civilians and defeat the Kurdish rebellion groups, compelling them to surrender or abandon their positions.

In fact, the regime made widespread use of chemical weapons. Human Rights Watch recorded forty separate chemical attacks on Kurdish villages between April 1987 and September 1988. The first chemical attack occurred on April 16, 1987, in the villages of Balisan and Sheikh Wasan, resulting in the killing of about 320 civilians, including sixty one children. However, Halabja became the symbol of Iraq's chemical attacks because of the large-scale civilian casualties there, which reached nearly 5,000.

The Anfal operation was also characterized by mass summary executions and the disappearance of civilians; nearly 100,000 as mentioned above although Kurdish sources generally cite the figure as being 182,000. While this may be an over-estimation, Al-Majid's dispute with Kurdish negotiators in 1991 is a good indicator and acknowledgement of the scale at which people disappeared. In a meeting with a Kurdish delegation during the 1991 round of negotiations, Al-Majid became furious as the Kurds raised the matter of the number of missing Kurds. A member of the delegation recalls that Al-Majid

shouted ‘what is this exaggerated figure of 182,000? It couldn’t have been more than 100,000’ (Makiya, 1993, p. 168).

Despite the similar use of brutality during both types of Anfal operation, in the Security-Anfal (i.e. first, fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth stages), the targeted population, as well as the Peshmerga forces, were given an escape route. In contrast, during the Identity-Anfal, civilians and the armed Peshmergas, were encircled from all sides. The methods that were applied in the different stages of the Anfal is another area of difference. Military operations during the Security-Anfal were organized in a way that allowed the survival of the majority of the population in these areas. For example, in the eighth stage of the Anfal, around 80,000 civilians including hundreds of Peshmerga personnel managed to escape to Turkey and Iran (Human Rights Watch, 1993, p. 276; Dzayi, 2001, p. 151). The majority of victims in the Security-Anfal were settled in existing or newly built collective centers or allowed to flee to neighboring countries (United States Senate-Committee on Foreign Relations, 1988).

The Iraqi government’s approach in the Identity-Anfal (i.e. second, third and fourth stages) was driven by the de-Kurdification policy. The measures taken by the Iraqi troops shed more light on why the regime singled out the Kirkuk area. Unlike other areas, the Iraqi troops in the Kirkuk catchment encircled the targeted areas before launching their attacks, thus leaving no other option for the civilians but to surrender. Army trucks transported the prisoners to temporary collection centers for processing (Human Rights Watch, 1993, pp. 129–166, 169–190). Such measures were rarely used in other areas, with the exception of the Dohuk catchment where a collection center was also set up. However, the difference was that the Dohuk catchment was not fully encircled and it was possible for as many as 80,000 civilians to escape by crossing the border into Turkey, as mentioned (Human Rights Watch, 1993, p. 276; Dzayi, 2001, p. 151). Victims of the Identity-Anfal either surrendered themselves or were arrested by Iraqi troops. After their surrender or capture, boys and men roughly between the ages of 15 and 60, were separated from their families and hauled off to execution sites outside Kurdish populated areas to be killed and buried in mass graves in the desert areas of southern and western Iraq. Older men and women were dispatched to Nugrat Salman, a notorious prison located in the desert west of al-Muthanna province in southern Iraq (Human Rights Watch, 1993, pp. 220–225).

In a nutshell, since the aim of the Security-Anfal was to target the security threat posed by the Peshmerga forces, a conventional military strategy was utilized which largely left a passage for the civilians and enemy forces to escape. However, as the Identity-Anfal was politically driven with the aim of changing the demography of the targeted areas, the military encircled the area, captured the inhabitants, removed them from their dwellings, and sent them to detention centers to be annihilated, so they never had a chance to come back to the areas that the government intended to completely de-Kurdify and/or Arabize.

### **Anfal, patterns of disappearance and killing**

In *Genocide in Iraq: The Anfal campaigns Against the Kurds*, Human Rights Watch argues that ‘No single theory can adequately explain the mass disappearances of women and children from southern Garmian [Kirkuk catchment], although they may in part reflect a mentality of reprisals for the stiff resistance that the army faced.’ Then it maintains that ‘in the first seven Anfal operation, the mass disappearance of women and children frequently



mirrored the pattern of peshmerga resistance' (Human Rights Watch, 1993, p. 170, 283). However, closer scrutiny of the different stages of the Anfal operation reveals that the pattern of disappearances varied significantly according to whether or not the captured civilians resided in the Kirkuk catchment area or outside it. Indeed, Table 1, which is largely based on the HRW data regarding the intensity of resistance for each stage of the Anfal operation, demonstrates that the pattern of disappearances does *not* mirror the intensity of the resistance. Rather, the areas where Iraqi troops faced the most tenacious resistance (i.e. first, fifth, sixth and seventh stages, categorized as the Security-Anfal) had much lower numbers of civilians who vanished.

Moreover, during the Identity-Anfal (i.e. second, third and fourth stages), targeting the Kirkuk catchment, in contrast to elsewhere we see large numbers of women and children also being targeted and vanished. Furthermore, most of the civilians who are recorded as having disappeared from the Suleimaniyeh catchment (12.95 percent) were actually those who had earlier fled their homes in the Qaradagh district to the south only to be rounded up within the Kirkuk catchment area. Taking this fact into consideration, the numbers of people who vanished during the second stage of the Anfal should also be added to the number of people recorded as having vanished from the Kirkuk catchment area (i.e. third and fourth stages) because they were captured there even though they came from the Suleimaniyeh catchment. When this is taken into account, then the figure for civilians who were captured and who vanished in the Kirkuk catchment rises to 88.04 percent. It is relevant to note that the areas of the second stage of the Anfal were contiguous to the Kirkuk catchment, and this might have been why the civilians in that area encountered the same fate as the people from the Kirkuk catchment.

By scrutinizing the pattern of disappeared (killed) persons in all stages of the Anfal, it is clear that the measures taken in the Identity-Anfal exceeded those of the Security-Anfal by targeting the very existence of the Kurds as a nation. The Iraqi government dealt with civilians differently in the Kirkuk catchment compared to other catchments; in other words, areas targeted for security reasons. In the second, third and fourth stages (i.e. the Identity-Anfal), the lives of civilians were rarely spared (Human Rights Watch, 1993). Also, in these three stages of the Anfal operation, women and children were exposed to mass killings alongside adult males (Hiltermann, 2008, pp. 6–7). Mostly adult males were killed and disappeared in the Security-Anfal, but males, females, and teenagers, were killed and disappeared in the Identity-Anfal. During the Identity-Anfal operation thousands of women were murdered and countless abused. Deaths in the Security-Anfal mainly occurred in the field and lives of captured civilians were mostly spared, while in the Identity-Anfal captured civilians were disappeared and the victims of to mass killing.

Furthermore, Table 1 indicates that the majority of disappeared people were from the areas categorized as Identity-Anfal. This demonstrates that the pattern of disappearances does *not* mirror the intensity of the resistance. In terms of death tolls, there is a clear difference between the two types of the Anfal as less than 12 percent of civilians who vanished were in the stages designated in this article as the Security-Anfal. However, the stages of the Anfal designated as the Identity-Anfal accounts for the vast majority of those killed and vanished, over 88 percent. In fact, these figures could have been even higher had a large number of detainees from Kirkuk catchment not escaped when the Kurdish townspeople of Chamchamal stoned the trucks and smashed the windows of a convoy carrying detainees through the city (Human Rights Watch, 1993, p. 158).

In the five stages designated as the Security-Anfal (i.e. first, fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth), the total number of disappearances was estimated to be only in the thousands (see [Table 1](#); [Hiltermann, 2008](#), p. 7). Therefore, the overwhelming majority of the victims were from the second, third and fourth stages. If the total number of disappeared Kurds in all of the Anfal stages is considered to be 100,000, as estimated by Human Rights Watch, then 88,000 of them were from the Kirkuk catchment. Thus, it can be argued that the Iraqi genocidal operation in this catchment was designed to carry out the de-Kurdification policy of Kirkuk city and its surroundings. In addition, as part of the de-Kurdification and/or Arabization policy of the Kirkuk province, hundreds of thousands of Arabs were settled in the city proper and surrounding areas. By all estimates, nearly half a million Kurds were affected by the de-Kurdification policy. The rest of the Kurds in Kirkuk province faced different forms of forced assimilation, deportation, dislocation, and/or discrimination.

A comparison between the Identity-Anfal and the two genocides that happened in the same period may be useful. The two genocides are the Rwandan genocide, committed by the Hutu paramilitary forces in 1994, and the Bosnian genocide, committed by Bosnian-Serb militia forces in 1995. The Rwandan and Bosnian genocides were recognized by the international community as genocide. There were both similarities and differences between the Identity-Anfal and the Rwandan and Bosnian genocides. One main similarity was the widespread rape and abuse of women and children. Systematic rapes of women were perpetrated as part of genocide against the Rwandan Tutsis and Bosnian Muslims ([Human Rights Watch, 1994b, 1995](#); [Yanagizawa-Drott, 2014](#), p. 5; [International Court of Justice, 2007](#), p. 167). Similarly, many female victims of the Identity-Anfal in Iraqi Kurdistan were subjected to regular raping by Iraqi security agents ([Muhamad, 2017](#), p. 162; [Hardi, 2016](#); [Human Rights Watch, 1993](#)).

Despite the above-mentioned similarity, there were also several differences between the Kurdish genocide and the Rwandan and Bosnian genocides. The first difference between the Kurdish genocide and the other two cases, was the identity of the perpetrators and the role of the state. In the case of the Rwandan and Bosnian genocides, the killings and rape were committed by state sponsored militia forces, rather than directly by state agents and/or agencies. In Rwanda, the bulk of killings were done by paramilitaries such as the Mouvement Republicain National pour le Developpement et la Democratie (MRND) and the Coalition pour la Defense de la Republique (CDR) (see [Human Rights Watch, 1994b](#); [Yanagizawa-Drott, 2014](#), p. 5). Similarly, in Bosnia, the mass killings were conducted by a militia known as the Bosnian-Serb Army (VRS) (see [International Court of Justice, 2007](#), p. 116). In the Kurdish case in Iraq, however, the Iraqi state perpetrated the genocide and the state agents and agencies committed the rapes. [Human Rights Watch \(1993\)](#) reports show that during the Anfal operation 'the integrated resources of the entire military, security and civilian apparatus of the Iraqi state were deployed.'

The second main difference between the Anfal genocidal operation and the Rwandan and Bosnian genocide was the widespread use of chemical weapons during the Anfal operation, whilst there is no record of the use of weapons of mass destruction during the two other genocides. Moreover, in the Bosnian case, men had been the main targets of the mass killings, while the lives of women and children were usually spared. In contrast, in the Identity-Anfal, Kurdish men and women were equally targeted ([Human Rights Watch, 1993](#)).

## Conclusion

From late February to early September of 1988, Kurds of Iraq were subjected to a brutal eight-stage genocidal campaign known as the Anfal operation. This article has examined some historical documents about the Anfal operation. It focused on and scrutinized the pattern of killings and disappearance of civilians and Peshmerga forces in order to explain the hidden reasons behind the genocidal campaign against Iraqi Kurds in the late 1980s by the Iraqi government. Based on the findings of the research, this article has argued that out of the eight stages of the Anfal operation five stages, that is the first, fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth can be categorized as the Security-Anfal. The remaining stages, that is the second, third, and fourth, can be categorized as the Identity-Anfal.

These two types of Anfal, the Security-Anfal and the Identity-Anfal, were different from one other in many ways, including the aims, targeted areas, targeted populations, policies, methods, patterns of killing and military procedures. First, while eliminating the Kurdish nationalist movement was the primary aim of the Security-Anfal, changing Kirkuk's demographic identity was the key objective of the Identity-Anfal. Second, the Security-Anfal targeted the rural highlands of the Erbil, Suleimaniyeh and Duhok catchments. However, the Identity-Anfal targeted the rural plains of the Kirkuk catchment. Third, the policy of depopulation and deportation were at the heart of the Security-Anfal but the policy of de-Kurdification was at the core of the Identity-Anfal. Fourth, generally speaking, killing and disappearance were limited to members of the Peshmarga forces and adult males who the Iraqi government considered as saboteurs in the Security-Anfal whereas males, females, teenagers and even children were killed and buried in the mass graves during the Identity-Anfal. Fifth, deaths in the Security-Anfal mainly occurred on the battlefields and lives of captured civilians were mostly spared. In contrast, captured armed personnel and unarmed civilians simultaneously were subjected to summary execution and/or burial in mass graves during the Identity-Anfal. Sixth, military procedures during both types of Anfal were reasonably similar in terms of brutality and usage of chemical weapons. In the Security-Anfal, however, the targeted population was given an escape route yet during the Identity-Anfal the targeted population was often encircled from all sides. Finally, in terms of death tolls, there is a clear difference between the two types of Anfal. The casualties in the Security-Anfal represented only 12 percent of the total number of people killed or disappeared; however, casualties in the areas which suffered during the Identity-Anfal were far greater, with nearly 88 percent of the people disappeared.

In sum, the Security-Anfal was seen from the Iraqi government's perspective as a final solution to its longstanding fight against the Kurdish national movement that gained momentum in the mid-1980s. However, the Identity-Anfal was an anti-Kurdish policy designed for social engineering in order to change the demography and, thereby, the identity of the strategically significant oil-rich regions of Kirkuk province. The Security Anfal was a counter insurgency operation in response to Kurdish rebellion groups. However, the Identity Anfal was a well-planned strategy to ethnically cleanse Kurds from Kirkuk province in order to pave the way for further Arabization measures. Despite these differences, the Identity Anfal and the Security Anfal both constituted a genocidal act committed against the Kurds by the Iraqi state but there were also geopolitical and geo-economic strategies and objectives behind the Anfal operation in order to control the natural resources in the Kurdish populated areas within Iraq.

## Notes

1. Human Rights Watch's seminal works, *Iraq's Crime of Genocide: the Anfal Campaign against the Kurds*, and *Bureaucracy of Repression: The Iraqi Government in Its Own Words*, the two main sources of this article, are based on eighteen tons of official Iraqi state documents captured by Kurdish political parties in the 1991 uprising that provide evidence that the Anfal campaign by the government of Iraq against its population of rural Kurds in 1988 amounted to genocide.
2. *Al-Waqai' al-Iraqiya* is the Official Gazette of Iraq and has been published since August 1922.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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