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Pillage as the Political Economy of the Kurdish Anfal Genocide

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Introduction

Scholars of the Armenian genocide have offered remarkable insight into the economic dimensions of genocide by examining plunder and the range of micro-economic interests involved in the Armenian genocide,¹ including the Young Turk regime's confiscation of Armenian property.² These scholars have criticized how economists disregard "the questions of genocide"³ and how legislatures have not given looting sufficient attention.⁴ In Iraq, too, plunder and the confiscation of Kurdish property were part of Iraq's political policy and cultural norms from the beginning of the Kurdish genocide, which started with the burning of Kurdish villages in 1963. Despite this long history of such phenomena, this article focuses specifically on looting and confiscations during the Anfal genocide from 1985 onwards.

The large-scale, physical phase of the Anfal genocide occurred in eight stages between February and September of 1988. It included chemical warfare, ground offensives, and aerial bombing.⁵ Some 182,000 Kurds were buried alive in mass graves, many of which were discovered only after Saddam Hussein was overthrown in 2003. About 70% of the victims were male and of "battle age," between 15–50 years old.⁶ Two-and-a-half million civilians were displaced, and hundreds of thousands of people were forcibly transported to concentration camps. 17,000 people disappeared.⁷ An estimated 4,500 Kurdish villages and at least 31 Assyrian villages were razed to the ground; 90% of Kurdish villages in Iraq and more than 20 small towns and cities were completely destroyed.⁸

Genocide is planned; it requires extensive military, economic, and budgetary planning, as well as the raising of revenue. The well-planned preparation for the Anfal genocide began in the early 1980s. However, because the Kurdish genocides have generally been overlooked by both international and Kurdish scholars, those rare sources that do discuss the Anfal genocide depict it as taking place entirely in 1988. Thus, the first section of this study shows that the Anfal genocide in fact began in 1985 and lasted until the end of 1989. Next, the study expands on its arguments and discusses how economic interests were inextricably linked to the Ba'ath Party's multidimensional justifications for the Anfal genocide, which was legitimized through looting and confiscation policies. It argues that Saddam used economic prospect theory to maximize revenue and minimize the costs of killing. Likewise, he utilized symbolic religious

¹ Taner Akçam, *Killing Orders: Talat Pasha's Telegrams and the Armenian Genocide* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018); Ümit Kurt, "The Political Micro-Economy of the Armenian Genocide, 1915–1922," *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 20, no. 6 (2018), 618–638.

² Uğur Üngör and Mehmet Polatel, *Confiscation and Destruction: The Young Turk Seizure of Armenian Property* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013).

³ Jurgen Brauer and Charles Anderton, "Economics and Genocide: Choices and Consequences," *Economics Department Working Papers* (2014), 1.

⁴ See, for example, Stuart P. Green, "Looting, Law, and Lawlessness," *Tulane Law Review* 81, no. 4 (2006–2007), 1129–1174; P. Sean Morris, "Economic Genocide Under International Law," *Journal of Criminal Law* 82, no. 1 (2018), 18–34.

⁵ George J. Andreopoulos, ed., *Genocide: Conceptual and Historical Dimensions* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997).

⁶ Human Rights Watch (HRW), *Genocide in Iraq: The Anfal Campaign against the Kurds* (New York: HRW, 1993), 266–267.

⁷ Also see Habibollah Atarodi, *Great Powers, Oil and the Kurds in Mosul (Southern Kurdistan/Northern Iraq), 1910–1925* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2003).

⁸ HRW, *Genocide in Iraq*, 14–115.

names and Qur'an verses to revive and foster the cultural tradition of looting among ordinary people, rather than as a form of genuine religious commitment.

Methodology

This article employs an interdisciplinary qualitative method that permits different interpretive perspectives. In addition to collecting data from secondary sources, it investigates official government documents and makes use of semi-structured interviews. During the 1991 uprising, the Kurds seized vast quantities of official documents, many of which have been preserved in the author's archive. These documents help make up for the dearth of academic resources on the Anfal and the Kurdish genocide in general. The documents are interleaved with findings from the semi-structured interviews as a substitute for non-academic sources and to provide a link between the community and academia. For the author's Ph.D. dissertation,⁹ these interviews were conducted in 2017 with 10 people in Basur, Kurdistan/Northern Iraq, in the cities of Sulaymaniyah, Khanaqin, Kirkuk, Kalar, and Erbil. The interviewees are of diverse ages; they were chosen based on their academic or political expertise on the matter or due to their experiences with the Ba'ath atrocities. Despite the lack of literature on the topic, as someone familiar with the language, culture, and region, the author could locate and interact with participants without difficulties.

Initial Phase of the Anfal Genocide

Relatively few studies in existing available literature have investigated the Anfal genocide of the Kurds, and most of those that have done so focus entirely on events during the relatively brief period spanning February to September of 1988.¹⁰ Yet, this is a distortion of the historical record that ignores a long series of preparatory, lower key—but no less genocidal—actions in the preceding years. During the 1991 Kurdish uprising in Iraq, resistance movements captured about 18 tons, or 5 million pages,¹¹ of the Ba'ath regime's secret documents.¹² The dates of many of the documents in this cache amply demonstrate that the Anfal genocide began in the early 1980s, and thus cannot be reduced to the single year 1988. For instance, a document dated June 24, 1985—on a *Director of Intelligence Services* letterhead, marked *Secret and Urgent*, filed under number 835, registration 5851, volume 846, and issued to all security committees—orders recipients to shut off all public services in villages which were listed and provided in an attachment, including electricity, health, food, business agencies, and “all other services.”¹³ This document indicates that as early as 1985, the Iraqi state was already perpetrating actions that qualify as genocide under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, which defines, as genocide, acts such as “deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part” (Article II).¹⁴ The fact was that Kurdish villagers' livelihoods depended primarily on agriculture; this policy prevented them from selling their harvests in the cities and also prevented local village businesses from bringing goods to the cities for sale. One villager, Ali Tahsin, who lived in the

⁹ Kaziwa Salih, “Genocide Culture: From Everyday Cultural Doxa and Ethnic Engineering to Genocide of Kurds in Iraq,” (PhD diss., Queen's University, 2020), <https://qspace.library.queensu.ca/handle/1974/27623>.

¹⁰ HRW, *Genocide in Iraq; Ibrahim Sadiq, Origins of the Kurdish Genocide: Nation Building and Genocide as a Civilizing and De-Civilizing Process* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2021).

¹¹ Omar Sheikhmous, *Some Observations on the Anfal and Genocidal Campaigns in Iraqi Kurdistan* (Sulaymaniyah: Jamal Erfan Cultural Organization Press, 2015), 7–8.

¹² Iraq and the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) transferred this archive to the United States. It has been 30 years since Kurdish researchers have had adequate access to it, except for only a number of widely used documents.

¹³ See Appendix No. 1: Iraqi Director of Intelligence Services, document number 835, registration 5851, volume 846, issued on June 24, 1985. Author's archive.

¹⁴ United Nations (UN), “Secretariat Draft: First Draft of the Genocide Convention, Prepared by the UN Secretariat, [May] 1947 [UN Doc. E/447],” *Prevent Genocide International* (website, n.d.), March 12, 2023, <http://www.preventgenocide.org/law/convention/drafts/>.

Qaradagh district at the time, stated in an interview that many people died during these years due to the lack of medical care in the villages and the prohibition on villagers seeking care in cities.¹⁵ This document is just one example of how the Anfal genocide began well before 1988. The following pages will further discuss a range of similar documents.

One key figure in these early periods of the Anfal genocide, as well as in its later and better-known phases, was Ali Hassan al-Majid, nicknamed Chemical Ali, Saddam's cousin, who served as a military advisor and the head of the Iraqi Intelligence Service in the 1980s. Following a botched assassination attempt against Saddam in 1982, al-Majid was assigned to carry out a genocide in the Shia town of Dujail, which he razed to the ground.¹⁶ After the collapse of the 1985 negotiations between the Ba'ath party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK; Kurdish: Yekîtiya Nîştimanî ya Kurdistanê),¹⁷ and following the PUK's cooperation with Iran in order to obtain weapons,¹⁸ the Ba'ath party appointed al-Majid to also direct the Kurdish genocide as Regional Commander. Notably, this process started well before 1988. Immediately after his appointment, in 1985–1986, al-Majid imprisoned 1,500 Kurdish school children aged from 8 to 14 as retaliation against their families. To this date, the bodies of only 72 of these children have been recovered.¹⁹

The main Iraqi blueprint for the 1988 Anfal operation, as executed by al-Majid, can be found in policy number 28/4008, issued on June 21, 1987. Written on *Ba'ath Northern Bureau Command* letterhead and directed to the First, Second, and Fifth Command Corps, the document says: "We have decided that the following actions should be taken effective 22 June 1987."²⁰ The nature of these "following actions" will be discussed shortly; here, I emphasize that the Anfal operation described in the document received instant approval, again indicating that the Anfal genocide did not occur only in 1988.

Further evidence of genocidal policies having started in advance of this date appears in a document, issued on March 3, 1987, by the Military Intelligence Directorate to the Eastern Region Intelligence Office, that orders the deportation and evacuation of all 40 Kurdish villages in the Qadir Karam sub-district.²¹ Similarly, a 1993 Human Rights Watch (HRW) publication highlights an Iraqi intelligence document describing the destruction of a village in 1986–1987.²²

Not only did policymaking begin several years earlier, so too did preparation. It was for precisely this purpose that the Iraqi government created the Jash militia within Kurdish society in the early 1980s. This militia supported the genocidal state, and it was the militia members, whom the state called *knights* (*Fursan*), along with Iraqi special forces, who would carry out the genocide later in that decade. The explicit planning for the Anfal genocide is discussed below. Even without delving into such details, however, government documents and policies, as well as the establishment of such military forces as the Jash militia, clearly indicate that the Anfal genocide actually began in the early 1980s. As the

¹⁵ Ali Tahsin, interview by author, Kurdistan, 2017.

¹⁶ Con Coughlin, *Saddam: His Rise and Fall* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2005).

¹⁷ HRW, *Genocide in Iraq*, 266–267. First mentioned in note 6.

¹⁸ David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (New York: IB Tauris & Co., 2004), 199.

¹⁹ Iraqi Experts Report: A commission of Iraqi (Arab and Kurd) Financial, and Legal Experts, *'aswuwliat al-Iraqia al-madaniat ean jarimat alabadat aljamaeiat almurtakibat dida al-Kurd* [Iraq's Civil Responsibilities for the Crimes of Genocide Committed against the Kurds, the economic-legal study] (Baghdad: Iraqi Commission and Ministry of Martyrs and Anfal Affairs, no date). Information on this report can be found in Vala Fareed's book; see also Vala Fareed, *Almaswalia almadaniat alduwaliat ean jarimat alabadat aljamaeia dirasat altatbiqiat* [International Civil Responsibility for the Crime of Genocide: An applied study on the case of Iraqi Kurdistan] (Erbil: Salahaddin University Press, 2004).

²⁰ Appendix No. 2: Iraqi genocide policy by the Ba'ath Northern Bureau Command to the First, Second, and Fifth Command Corps; document number 28/4008, issued on June 21, 1987.

²¹ Appendix No. 3: (secret document from the) Military Intelligence Directorate to the Eastern Region Intelligence Office, document number 5940 /M1, S3, Q2, issued on March 14, 1987.

²² HRW, *Genocide in Iraq*, 36. First mentioned in note 6.

Carnegie Endowment for International Peace noted in 1944: “Genocide does not necessarily mean the immediate destruction of a nation, except when accomplished by mass killings of all members of a nation.”²³ Moreover, the genocide also stretched beyond the end date usually assigned to it. Certainly, mass destruction and killing did occur in 1988. But even the eighth stage of 1988 was not the end of the Anfal genocide. The genocidal actions in the villages around Kirkuk, among the Êzidî, and in the Christian villages “continued until at least February 1989,”²⁴ while cultural genocide formally continued in Kirkuk and Khanaqin beyond 2003 and the collapse of Saddam’s power.²⁵

The invisibility—or denial—of the early process of the Anfal genocide has arisen in part due to the Kurdish community’s internalization of this denial. Denialism not only “marshals its own facts and truth”²⁶ where it germinates, it is also internalized and reproduced by those who have experienced it and those who have disseminated it. This internalization, as well as a lack of knowledge about these aspects of the Anfal genocidal campaign in the field of genocide studies, has also resulted in a misapprehension of the political economy that fostered the Anfal genocide.

The Multidimensional Political Economy of the Anfal

Genocide, as Lemkin states in a draft ultimately omitted from the United Nations Convention on Genocide in 1948, is not only the process of physical destruction; it represents a concerted strategy of various measures aimed at destroying the key foundations of a national group’s life, in order to annihilate the group itself. The goal of such a scheme is the collapse of a national group’s political and social structures, culture, language, national feelings, religion, and economic existence.²⁷ Accordingly, genocide is a protracted and multidimensional process. In addition to large-scale physical destruction, the Anfal genocide also included the destruction of each of the aforementioned dimensions of Kurdish society. Moreover, this multidimensionality is characterized in the destruction of each element and pattern, as mentioned by Lemkin. The particular matrix of the Anfal genocide’s political economy, for instance, incorporated several interconnected and multidimensional axes. Nevertheless, this paper limits its discussion to the prospect theory of economic capital, specifically, to confiscation and looting as two powerful techniques of capital accumulation, and to *spoils of war* as a method of compensation.

Before proceeding to a specific discussion on looting and confiscation, it is important to recognize that this is only one dimension out of a cluster of interconnected, multi-dimensional objectives which were pursued in the Anfal genocide. This is made clear by the primary genocide policy document for the Anfal genocide: article 5, memo number 28/4008, dated June 21, 1987, which came from the Ba’ath Northern Bureau Command, headed by Ali Hassan al-Majid. The Iraqi High Criminal Court drew on this document during its proceedings against Saddam and other Ba’ath party members accused of genocide and crimes against humanity in 2004–2006. The document authorizes the following genocidal actions:

All Kurdish villages must be abandoned; the armed forces must kill any human being or animal present within these areas; travel to and from these villages, and all types of investments in them, are severely prohibited; the area is to

²³ Raphael Lemkin, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe: Laws of Occupation, Analysis of Government, Proposals for Redress* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace Division of International Law, 1944), 79.

²⁴ HRW, *Genocide in Iraq*, 319.

²⁵ Kaziwa Salih, “Demographic Engineering, the Forcible Deportation of the Kurds in Iraq, and the Question of Ethnic Cleansing and Genocide,” *State Crime Journal* 11, no. 2 (2022), 188–208.

²⁶ Akçam, *Killing Orders*, 2. First mentioned in note 1.

²⁷ Lemkin, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*, 79.

receive continuous random bombardments using artillery, helicopters, and aircraft; looting is legalized; and everything seized by Iraqi advisers or fighters is theirs to keep, except for heavy weapons.²⁸

Together, these objectives and genocidal intent show the multidimensionality of the political economy of the Anfal genocide, which sought to spend less and gain more—in other words, to deploy prospect theory—by stripping the Kurdish population of their economic resources in order to reward the genocide’s perpetrators.

Saddamist Prospect Theory

Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky first introduced prospect theory in 1979. They claimed that this theory was superior to the expected utility theory at properly articulating how decisions are made. Losses, they claimed, have a higher emotional impact than gains of the same amount. The core finding of prospect theory is that people’s attitudes toward risk differ depending on whether they are losing or gaining.²⁹ In political science, prospect theory has been widely used in the field of international relations;³⁰ it has also been applied in political decision-making, although it challenges the rationality of decisions,³¹ and has served to examine the political and strategic phenomena of coercive bargaining.³² Saddam Hussein used it in numerous political arenas, including the genocide strategy, which will be explained in this section. The sections that follow will indicate that he employed prospect theory for coercive bargaining when he hired non-Iraqi Arabs and the Jash Militia to commit genocide in certain Kurdish areas. He also employed *indecisiveness*, in the form of his oft-changing decisions.

Economically speaking, the Anfal genocide was an exceedingly well-calculated strategy to harness the emotion of gain by maximizing it and minimizing loss. Although by 1988, the Iraqi regime had stripped the Kurdish region of its natural resources and personal wealth, during the Anfal genocide, the Ba’ath party sought a shrewd economic equation to achieve two objectives: killing the Kurds via an economically inexpensive method,³³ and raising revenue from these killings to pay the expenses of the military, the perpetrators, and the regime’s supporters.

Evidence indicates that Saddam employed prospect theory by seeking an effortless, inexpensive method to exterminate the Kurds long before the Anfal genocide. However, the technique proposed to him was not particularly rapid or effective. For example, Iraqi scholar Baqer Yassin documented a Saddam meeting with a group of *his reliable and trusted people* along with Ba’ath officers early in the 1980s and asking how his regime could exterminate the Kurds in the whole of Iraq as a species of humanity and as a nation. Saddam showed particular interest in finding a water-soluble chemical that would cause certain infertility if placed in the water tanks of Kurdish cities.³⁴ Yassin stated that this conversation did not occur in the context of military combat or crisis—Saddam simply wanted a chemical that would cause infertility in men, even if its effects were gradual. His questions revolved around what would happen if the

²⁸ See Appendix No. 2: Iraqi genocide policy by the Ba’ath Northern Bureau Command, 1987. First mentioned in note 20. Translations have been done by author.

²⁹ Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky, “Prospect Theory: An Analysis of Decision under Risk,” *Econometrica* 47, no. 2 (1979), 263–292.

³⁰ Rose McDermott, “Prospect Theory in Political Science: Gains and Losses from the First Decade,” *Political Psychology* 25, no. 2 (2004), 289–312.

³¹ Barbara Farnham, “Roosevelt and the Munich Crisis: Insights from Prospect Theory,” *Political Psychology* 13, no. 2 (1992), 205–235.

³² Christopher K. Butler, “Prospect Theory and Coercive Bargaining,” *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 51, no. 2 (2007), 227–250.

³³ Joost Hiltermann, “A New Sectarian Threat in the Middle East?,” *International Review of the Red Cross* 89, no. 868 (2007), 795–808.

³⁴ Baqer Yassin, *Alaijtithath Waldyktaturiat min nafs al’iiman fi al-Iraq* [Ablation and Dictatorships on the Same Principle in Iraq] (Erbil: Aras Publication, 2012), 99.

state would mix such a chemical with other chemicals which were routinely added to water, and then to add these chemicals to all the potable water tanks in Kurdish cities over an extended period. He wanted to know how many generations of Kurds would have to drink this *doctored* water, and over how long a period, before all future Kurds were exterminated. He also wanted to know how many victims this could claim over that period, what factors and obstacles could impede the success and execution of this plan, and what could be done about the rural population, who did not drink from the cities' taps but rather from springs, rivers, and rivulets.³⁵ Prospect theory argues that people behave differently in response to peril and uncertainty.³⁶ Thus, Saddam's advisers promised him that they would seek a more rapid and effective technique, given this proposed method's ineffective and inexpensive nature.³⁷

Typically, factors such as past experiences, present circumstances, cultural norms, and individual preferences can influence the evolution of prospect theory.³⁸ Perhaps these elements encouraged Saddam to select the name *Anfal* for the Kurdish genocide. Regardless, Saddam's preparation for the Anfal genocide indicates that the Ba'ath regime sought to complete it as quickly as possible while maximizing its lethal effects, minimizing its economic cost, and maximizing its economic gain to the state. This suggests that one of its goals may have been to use the economic resources of its victims to sponsor the genocide operations' expenses. Consequently, the regime's preparation focused particularly on expanding the pro-Iraqi Kurdish Jash militia, mentioned above. To increase the Jash militia's membership, the regime waived military service for Jash entrants and offered them economic capital, influence, and rewards.³⁹ As a result, by 1986, the Jash militia had reached 150,000 members.⁴⁰

Sociologically, the prospect theory of war and violence serves industrial and military interests at the expense of social needs and cohesion. These two sectors "make violence a much more potent means of wielding state power."⁴¹ Militarizing or *Jashnizing* the Kurdish community empowered Saddam's state and facilitated its planned genocide in several ways. First, the Jash militia was able to discover routes to hitherto undiscovered, isolated villages.⁴² Second, because members of the militia were parts of their respective communities, they were familiar with each region's capital resources and how they were stored, which simplified looting. Third, participation in the militia entailed the killing of Kurds by Kurds, which benefited the state in two ways; on the one hand, it resulted in the extermination of additional Kurds and on the other, the Kurds were renowned for their military prowess, so Saddam's methods aided him in conserving economic resources and achieving his genocidal objectives. Finally, the regime exaggerated the importance of the Jash militia in comparison to the dozens of other armed groups in Iraq in order to legitimize its actions.⁴³ All of this indicates that prospect theory—gaining more, losing less, and maximizing effectiveness—was taken into consideration.

In short, it is obvious that when Saddam sought the most cost-effective method of implementing the Anfal and Halabja genocides in the early 1980s, he was also intensely concerned with the revenue to be earned from looting and confiscation. As noted in relation to other international disputes, "conflict is a mode of wealth appropriation."⁴⁴ In fact, the Iraqi regime's

³⁵ Ibid., 99–100.

³⁶ Kahneman and Tversky, *Prospect Theory*, 265.

³⁷ Yassin, *Ablation and Dictatorships*, 99–100.

³⁸ Kahneman and Tversky, *Prospect Theory*, 286.

³⁹ Salih, *Genocide Culture*, 399–400. First mentioned in note 9.

⁴⁰ Christiane Bird, *A Thousand Sighs, a Thousand Revolts: Journeys in Kurdistan* (New York: Random House, 2004), 81.

⁴¹ Siniša Malešević, *The Sociology of War and Violence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 63.

⁴² The point was mentioned by the following interview participants: Muhsin Ali Akber, Vala Fareed, and Ali Tahsin; Muhsin Ali Akber, interview by author, Kurdistan, 2017; Vala Fareed, Minister of State for the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, interview by author, Kurdistan, 2021; Ali Tahsin, interview by author, Kurdistan, 2017.

⁴³ This information provided by interview participant Muhsin Ali Akber. See *ibid.*

⁴⁴ Charles H. Anderton and John R. Carter, *Principles of Conflict Economics: The Political Economy of War, Terrorism, Genocide, and Peace* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 22.

accumulation of capital would have been impossible without its appropriation of the Kurdish regions, known as the “breadbasket of Iraq.”⁴⁵

Capital Accumulation Policies in the Anfal Genocide

Even though the separation between power and well-being is a central principle of current social theory, “political economy attempts to tie together the quest for power with the pursuit of plenty.”⁴⁶ The origins of this duality can be traced back to the advent of industrial capitalism in the eighteenth century.⁴⁷ Ever since that period, the Kurds have borne the brunt of Western capitalism’s evolution: the political economy of oil trade policies colonized and divided their land, subjecting them to the first economic genocide.⁴⁸ Due to political economic interests and capital accumulation, the Western powers decided to link the Kurdish Mosul Wilayat, which includes the oil of Kirkuk, to Baghdad—thus undeniably legitimizing the Kurdish genocides. Since then, political economy has evolved into a mechanism for executing various forms of genocide in Iraq, including those committed during the Anfal genocide. Capital accumulation by the Ba’ath regime through the appropriation of the Kurdish economy played a momentous role in this process. It took several forms, including confiscation, looting, and the legitimization of the sociocultural expropriation of Kurdish properties.

Confiscation Policy

Confiscations and looting have figured in many wars, genocides, and colonial enterprises around the world in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, as they did in earlier millennia. In Iraq, too, the expropriation of targeted groups’ properties during ancient and modern conflicts between empires, emirates, and tribes left a cultural legacy within Iraqi society.⁴⁹ The Ba’ath party’s policy of confiscation and looting is not just one among several directives listed in its policy document number 28/4008,⁵⁰ described above. Starting in the 1960s, the Ba’ath Party transformed a cultural heritage of confiscation into formal state policies directed against the Kurds. The story of how the confiscation and looting of Kurdish possessions became legitimate in the late twentieth century has traditionally been linked to the politics of forcible Arabization and deportations in Iraq. The documentary record indicates that confiscation started in the cities. In particular, the Arabization of the oil-rich Kurdish provinces of Kirkuk and Khanaqin involved massive levels of confiscation and spoliation as the Arab families who moved into these regions confiscated the properties of displaced Kurds.⁵¹ Liam Anderson and Gareth Stansfield, for example, quote an “elderly Arab tribesman” from the al-Hadidi tribe, who explained how forty-seven families from his tribe were moved to the Kurdish village of Khanni Siddiq in 1975.⁵²

Similarly, Human Rights Watch (HRW) notes that the lands of the village of Kis Qal’a, as well as those of neighboring villages, were confiscated and reassigned to Arab farmers in the 1970s. Shaikh’ Abd al-Karim’ Abd Zitki, the Kurdish leader of the village of Kis Qal’a, reported that “the Iraqi government had kicked him and the other villagers of Kis Qal’a out of their homes on April 15, 1975.”⁵³ He was resettled in a remote area in southern Iraq, and his people had to build

⁴⁵ Mino Alinia, *Honor and Violence against Women in Iraqi Kurdistan* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 13.

⁴⁶ Jonathan Nitzan and Shimshon Bichler, “Capital Accumulation: Breaking the Dualism of ‘Economics’ and ‘Politics,’” in *Global Political Economy: Contemporary Theories*, ed. Ronen Palan (New York: Routledge, 2000), 67.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 67–68.

⁴⁸ Kaziwa Salih, *Genocide Culture, Kurdish Genocide, Iraqi Habitus, and Religious Doxa* (London: Routledge, forthcoming).

⁴⁹ Salih, *Demographic Engineering*. First mentioned in note 25.

⁵⁰ See Appendix No. 1. First mentioned in note 13.

⁵¹ Salih, *Genocide Culture*, 397. First mentioned in note 9; Nouri Talabany, *Arabization of the Kirkuk Region* (Uppsala: Kurdistan Studies Press, 2001).

⁵² Liam Anderson and Gareth Stansfield, *Crisis in Kirkuk: The Ethnopolitics of Conflict and Compromise* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 17.

⁵³ Hania Mufti and Peter Bouckaert, “Claims in Conflict Reversing Ethnic Cleansing in Northern Iraq,” *Human Rights Watch* 16, no. 4(E) (2004), 30, accessed March 13, 2023, <https://www.hrw.org/reports/2004/iraq0804/iraq0804.pdf>.

their “own houses from mud.”⁵⁴ It would require a volume just to publish all the documents of confiscation and looting in Kirkuk and Khanaqin.

The Ba’ath regime authorized various forms of confiscation during the Kurdish genocides, including the seizure of individual and group properties and confiscations from targeted Kurds. The Ministry of Martyrdom and Anfal Affairs in Kurdistan reported confiscations of the properties of thousands of wealthy Kurds.⁵⁵ The regime justified these actions on the grounds that the Kurdish owners were saboteurs, rebels, and traitors to what the Ba’athists called the *leader’s party*—or to the Ba’ath and Saddam. These confiscations occurred in cities of all sizes. For example, during the Anfal genocide in Dohuk, which has been assumed by the Kurdish population to have suffered fewer confiscations than larger cities such as Sulaymaniyah and Erbil or Kirkuk and Khanaqin, document number 426, issued on August 30, 1988, by the city’s real estate department to the Mayor of Dohuk District / Secret Unit reported that the “movable and unmovable properties” of the citizen Zaki Yassin Mahmud were confiscated on May 14, 1988, with the resolution number 7485.⁵⁶ Many participants in semi-structured interviews conducted in 2017 in Dohuk, Sulaymaniyah, Erbil, Kirkuk, and Khanaqin reported that they were still unable to recover their properties in 2003, after the Ba’ath regime’s collapse. This was because the regime gave their properties to participants in the state persecution and genocide of Kurds, who then sold them to the ordinary people that remain the current owners. Certain properties have changed hands several times since they were seized.⁵⁷ Additionally, the Iraqi government continues to ignore violations of the Kurdish population’s rights in this regard.⁵⁸ The acts of the Ba’ath State, in short, continue to reverberate down to the present day.

Moreover, the regime frequently used political and social incidents to justify the murders of Kurdish civilians and the confiscation or destruction of their property.⁵⁹ For example, document number 7026, dated December 2, 1988, reports the detention of several individuals and the demolition of their shops in Sulaymaniyah city; this had been authorized by policy number 18485, issued on December 1, 1988, under the supervision of Ali Hassan al-Majid, in response to the killing of an officer in the city.⁶⁰ The document does not specify how many people were detained or how many businesses were seized, but witnesses have stated that the regime often fabricated incidents to imprison people, including children.⁶¹

Every genocide against the Kurds involved an explicit policy of seizure and plundering. The 1993 HRW publication detailed numerous instances of the Iraqi regime’s confiscations of the property of rural and urban groups.⁶² The deportation of over 600,000 Kurdish members of the Faili community and the confiscation of their moveable and immovable property serves as an instructive case study of such activity.⁶³ The process of dehumanizing and foreignizing the Faili ethnic community began during the Ottoman Empire’s political conflict with the Safavid Empire. However, the Iraqi regime elevated this historical mistreatment to a new level after 1969. Resolution No. 666 of the Revolutionary Command Council, dated May 7, 1980, and signed by

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Aram Mohamed, Minister of the Ministry of Martyrdom and Anfal Affairs, interview by author, Kurdistan, 2017.

⁵⁶ Appendix No. 4: City of Dohuk Real Estate Department to Mayor of Dohuk District/Secret Unit, document number 426, issued on August 30, 1988.

⁵⁷ Residents of Kurdistan region, interview by author, Kurdistan Region of Iraq, 2017.

⁵⁸ Author’s interview with Vala Fareed. First mentioned in note 42.

⁵⁹ Author’s interview with Aram Mohamed. First mentioned in note 55.

⁶⁰ Appendix No. 5: Order for the detention of people and demolition of their shops in Sulaymaniyah, authorized by policy number 18485, issued on December 1, 1988; document number 7026, dated February 12, 1988.

⁶¹ Author’s interviews with Frishta Mustafa, Aram Mohamad (first mentioned in note 55), Hassan Resul, and Amina Osman; Frishta Mustafa, interview by author, online, 2017; Hassan Resul, interview by author, Kurdistan, 2017; Amina Osman, interview by author, Kurdistan, 2017.

⁶² HRW, *Genocide in Iraq*, 26. First mentioned in note 6.

⁶³ Salih, *Demographic Engineering*, 198. First mentioned in note 25.

Saddam himself,⁶⁴ not only explains the foreignization of the Failis but also opens them to genocide and forcible deportation to the “Iranian border into decades of exile and statelessness.”⁶⁵

Scholars have explained the Faili’s struggle in terms of Iraq’s Arabization policy toward the Kurds,⁶⁶ but this explanation oversimplifies the themes of foreignization and denationalization. First, the Faili community was primarily concentrated in Baghdad and Khanaqin; many Failis were born and raised in Baghdad and did not speak Kurdish, meaning they were already Arabized. Thus, while ethnic cleansing and Arabization do, to some extent, account for the treatment of the Failis in Khanaqin, this is not the case for Baghdad. According to Faili community leader Sadoon Faili, before their deportation between 1980 and 1990, when Iraq was at war, it was the Faili’s wealth that motivated deportation decisions: they were the wealthiest group in Iraq, owning lucrative businesses, as well as commercial and personal properties. The Iraqi government withdrew all their money from their banks, confiscated their possessions, and deported them with only what they were wearing—not even pocket money.⁶⁷

This was not an isolated situation; however, in Iraq, genocide against the Kurds was a perpetual process. Unsurprisingly, then, one notes that the Anfal genocide of the Kurdish Barzani group and the confiscations in their region began concurrently with the Faili genocide. Document number 84, issued on March 29, 1989, reported the activities of the Republican Guards Directorate in the Harir region that the genocide of the Barzani community on January 8, 1983, which resulted in the extermination of 8,000 men, activities which aimed at demographic destruction. The regime destroyed villages, confiscated belongings, and forcibly resettled victims in the Bahirke and Qushtapa camps. From only 2,225 detainees in the Harir complex in Shaqlawa, the Republican Guards collected a total of 194,648,440 Iraqi dinars and deposited them in the accounts of the Republican Guards Directorate.⁶⁸

Such documents show that the state policy of looting and confiscation in the context of the Anfal genocide was not the first of such policies signed by Saddam. In fact, the policy of confiscating property in central Kurdish cities followed for years with continual confiscations in Kirkuk and Khanaqin in the early stages of the Anfal genocide. Resolution number 1255, issued on October 21, 1985, and signed by Saddam, contains two decisions: (1) the mayors of the Kurdish cities of Ninawa, Dohuk, Sulaymaniyah, Erbil, Tamim (Kirkuk), and Salahuddin were authorized to sell all the movable and immovable property of saboteurs’ families; and that (2) the delegated ministers were to implement this decision.⁶⁹ *Saboteur* was, in theory, a label for Kurds which the Ba’athist State viewed as enemies and subversives—specifically, the Peshmerga, the Kurdish freedom fighters. Yet, given the enticements to seize and sell Kurdish property, who could avoid being branded as such?

Furthermore, the Ba’ath party constructed a special political language to enhance their brutal objectives and philosophy—one that never described an objective reality.⁷⁰ This language included exaggerated praise for the Ba’ath leaders, their accomplishments, and their military victories. It offered, on the one hand, overstated accounts of Iraqi or Arabic history, and on the other, the demonization and criminalization of opponents, particularly the Kurds. For Kurds, even supporting the regime by becoming Ba’athists did not change the political language of the Ba’ath

⁶⁴ Appendix No. 6: Resolution No. 666 of the Revolutionary Command Council; signed by Saddam Hussein, ordering the foreignization and deportation of the Failis; dated July 5, 1980.

⁶⁵ Elizabeth Campbell, “The Faili Kurds of Iraq: Thirty Years Without Nationality,” *ReliefWeb*, April 2, 2010, <https://reliefweb.int/report/iraq/faili-kurds-iraq-thirty-years-without-nationality>; see also, Antoine Bernard, ed., *Iraq: Continuous and Silent Ethnic Cleansing: Displaced Persons in Iraqi Kurdistan and Iraqi Refugees in Iran* (Paris: FIDH, 2003).

⁶⁶ Talabany, *Arabization of the Kirkuk Region*; see also, Zaid Al-Ali, *The Struggle for Iraq’s Future: How Corruption, Incompetence and Sectarianism Have Undermined Democracy* (London: Yale University Press, 2014), 32–33.

⁶⁷ Sadoon Faili, interview by author, Iraqi Kurdistan, 2017.

⁶⁸ Appendix No. 7: Order for the confiscation and looting of the Barzani victims of genocide in 1983 at the hands of the Iraqi Republican Guards; document number 84; issued by the Republican Guards Directorate on March 29, 1989.

⁶⁹ Appendix No. 8: Looting policy signed by Saddam Hussein, document number 1255, issued on October 21, 1985.

⁷⁰ Coughlin, *Saddam*.

party; they were still branded as saboteurs. Four participants confirmed that they became Ba'athists to protect their property from confiscation, but this ploy failed. Moreover, they were also required to change their ethnic background to Arabic upon joining the Ba'ath party.⁷¹

Overall, *saboteur* was a title given to every Kurd, regardless of individual actions. Each year, dozens of Kurdish families lost their houses and belongings under these arbitrary measures. This was how the Ba'ath's political language constructed their social reality. On April 6, 1987, after the regime had already launched its genocidal campaign against rural Kurds, Ali Hassan al-Majid issued Resolution 18/2396, which ordered the heads of the security committees in the Northern cities, i.e., the Kurdistan region, to confiscate the properties of all *saboteurs* within a month.⁷² This was how the Ba'ath justified their genocide of the Kurds in rural villages, and the destruction of these villages—the villagers were said to be helping *saboteurs*. Yet, pre-Anfal genocide documents and personal accounts demonstrate that Kurds were already, in general, labeled as *saboteurs* to be killed and their property to be confiscated. Indeed, property confiscation, looting, and the mistreatment of *saboteurs* were considered national duties.⁷³ During the Ba'ath regime, in short, plunder was transformed from a faded cultural practice into formal state policy.

Legalization of Plundering

Looting has occurred in some form or another since the beginning of recorded history,⁷⁴ up to recent cases in superpowers like the United States during the Black Lives Matter protests of 2020. However, the presence of looting during every phase of the Kurdish Anfal genocide indicates that it was never a by-product of conflict but rather predetermined by the regime's political economic policy toward the Kurds.

Historically, looting is deeply rooted in the cultural practices of Iraqi governmental institutions, and among Middle Eastern tribes in general. The *tribe* includes almost the whole population. Even now, “seventy-five percent of Iraq's estimated 26 million people are a member of a tribe and are strongly bound by these tribal ties and a strict honor code,”⁷⁵ or by tribal cultural practices. In ancient times, tribes earned their livelihoods by raiding and looting other tribes.⁷⁶ Thus, in Iraq, confiscation and plundering were never confined to periods of war, genocide, and colonization but also to defined ethnic, ideological, and personal conflicts. During the Anfal genocide, the Ba'ath regime developed two critical looting strategies, correspondingly drawing on political and religious factors. The latter reflected the state's deliberate exploitation of existing cultural practices.

The Religious Strategy

The word Anfal means “the spoils of war.” It is derived from the eighth sura (chapter) of the Qur'an, which contains 75 verses referring to the right to pillage an enemy's wealth and property. The sura tells the prophet Muhammad and his followers in the Battle of Badr in 624 CE to fight against and defeat non-believers using one of two methods—either conversion to

⁷¹ Author's interviews with Jasim Khanaqini, Abdulrazaq M., and Muhsin Ali Akber (first mentioned in note 42); Jasim Khanaqini, interview by author, Kurdistan, 2017; Abdulrazaq M., interview by author, Kurdistan, 2017.

⁷² Appendix No. 9: Resolution 18/2396 on the confiscation of the Kurds' properties, ordered by Ali Hassan al-Majid; issued on April 6, 1987.

⁷³ Author's interview with Muhsin Ali Akber (first mentioned in note 42), Aram Mohamad (first mentioned in note 55), and Khadija Roastem; Khadija Roastem, interview by author, Kurdistan, 2017.

⁷⁴ Green, *Looting, Law, and Lawlessness*. First mentioned in note 4.

⁷⁵ Hussein D. Hassan, “Iraq: Tribal Structure, Social, and Political Activities,” *CRS Report for Congress* (Washington, DC: CRS The Library of Congress, 2007), 1.

⁷⁶ Hanna Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and The Revolutionary Movement in Iraq* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1978); see also Patricio Asfura-Heim, “No Security Without Us:” *Tribes and Tribalism in Al Anbar Province, Iraq* (Arlington: CNA Analysis & Solutions, June 2014), 4, accessed March 17, 2023, https://www.cna.org/archive/CNA_Files/pdf/cop-2014-u-007918-final.pdf.

Islam or extermination.⁷⁷ Acceptable “plunder” included the lives of the targeted group, their possessions, and their women.⁷⁸ The Anfal genocide was thus grounded in 1400-year-old logic, based on the same sura that the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) would later use to justify the genocide and sexual enslavement of the Êzidî community, as well as the looting and destruction of their villages.⁷⁹

Why would Saddam use the name of one of Islam’s most pivotal battles against polytheism to describe his genocide of the Kurds? It would be a gross misunderstanding to interpret his use of religious symbolic names and Qur’an verses as evidence of religious fervor; in fact, Saddam identified himself as a near-deity.⁸⁰ The truth is, religion and politics have long been inextricably linked in the Middle East.⁸¹ For example, Saddam named his eight-year war against Iran, the al-Qādisiyyah battle of Islam, after the original battle that took place in 636 CE. The Ba’ath media frequently referred to the Kurdish and Iranian wars as holy wars against *infidels*. Saddam’s words could be interpreted as implying that Iraq was waging war on Iran, for example, because the Iranians’ ancient religion was Zoroastrianism. For decades, Arabic-language media outlets claimed that Kurdish Muslim populations were false Muslims.⁸² Similarly, Saddam declared a holy war on the United States in 1990, owing to the overwhelming support he had received from the Arab world for his wars and genocides.⁸³

In a society whose religious and cultural traditions have historically permitted pillaging, the construction of the Kurdish genocide in the religious realm, at least, leads to the following interpretations. First, such religious traditions would serve as reminders to the populace, and especially pillagers, to be strident, to commit genocide against Kurds, to plunder their property, and to take Kurdish women and children as *spoils of war*—just as their ancestors did with their own adversaries. Second, they will remind the faithful that they need not feel remorse for their actions because they are religiously justified. Third, they will encourage those opposed to Ba’ath ideology to see pillaging as both a national and religious duty, even if it serves Ba’ath’s political objectives. In these contexts, disciplinary authority was sustained by “a system of collective understanding of unique accomplishment in a formally established group.”⁸⁴

Consequently, the seventh point listed in genocide policy document 28/4008, from the Ba’ath Northern Bureau Command, states: “Everything seized by the advisers or fighters of the National Defense Battalions is considered theirs to keep, except heavy, mounted, and medium weapons. They can keep the light weapons, notifying us only of the number of these weapons.”⁸⁵ This policy directive drew upon ancient political, economic, and cultural traditions, and it proved

⁷⁷ Salih, *Genocide Culture*, 205. First mentioned in note 9; see also, Izz al-Din Ibn al-Athir and Carolus Johannes Tornberg, *Al-Kamil fi ‘al-Tarikh*, 9 volumes (Beirut: Dar Sadir, 1967).

⁷⁸ Salih, *Genocide Culture*, 205; see also, Kanan Makiya, *Cruelty and Silence: War, Tyranny, Uprising, and the Arab World* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1993); “Sayyid Abul Ala Maududi–Tafhim al-Qur’an–The Meaning of the Qur’an: 8. Surah Al Anfal (The Spoils of War),” *englishtafsir.com* (website), accessed March 23, 2023, <http://www.englishtafsir.com/Quran/8/index.html>.

⁷⁹ Kaziwa Salih, “Eazidi Women’s Practices of Empowerment and Capital Formation Following Enslavement by ISIS,” in *Handbook of Research on New Dimensions of Gender Mainstreaming and Women Empowerment*, ed. Moly Kuruvilla and Irene George (Hershey: IGI Global, 2020), 487–508.

⁸⁰ Salih, *Genocide Culture*, 206.

⁸¹ Jonathan Fox, “The Unique Role of Religion in Middle Eastern Ethnic Conflict: A Large-N Study,” *Turkish Policy Quarterly* 3, no. 1 (2004), 2.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ Kenneth Freed and Michael Ross, “Muslim Leaders Reject Hussein’s Call for Holy War on the ‘Infidels.’ Arabs: His Plea Finds Favor with Some. But Iran Labels it a ‘Propaganda Ploy’ and Syria Spurns Iraqi Policies,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 21, 1991, accessed March 13, 2023, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1991-01-21-mn-477-story.html>.

⁸⁴ Andrew M. Pettigrew, “On Studying Organizational Cultures,” *Qualitative Methodology* 24, no. 4 (1979), 573.

⁸⁵ See Appendix No. 2. First mentioned in note 20. The second part of the document in Appendix No. 2, detailing a policy of confiscation and looting of Kurdish rural areas from the Ba’ath Northern Bureau Command, document number 28/4008, dated June 21, 1987.

equally effective. Throughout history, every authority has used religion, sex obtained through the spoils of war (rape), and looting to gain tribal support.⁸⁶ Perhaps Saddam studied the histories of these tribes and concluded that legalizing confiscation and looting would ensure his victory in exterminating the Kurds.⁸⁷ If so, the consequences demonstrate that his vision was clear.

Consequences of Political and Religious Intervention

The outcome and scope of the Anfal looting and confiscations exemplify the power of fusing religious and political justifications. According to a report by the Ministry of Martyrs and Anfal Affairs, the cost (to the Kurds) of looting and confiscation from villages during the Anfal genocide was \$5,820,329,820.⁸⁸ This, however, seems like an underestimate. There is no indication that the report included the properties of the hundreds of thousands of people who were killed or who disappeared. Second, there is a dearth of data on a variety of products and properties common to rural Kurds. For example, Kurdish rural areas in Iraq were known for agriculture—virtually every family had livestock.⁸⁹ The report referred to hundreds of thousands of animals but did not provide specific numbers. The 1993 HRW publication also documented the widespread looting of civilian property and farm animals by army troops and pro-government militias.⁹⁰ Elsewhere, they noted, “the men were trucked away first. Then another army IFA [truck] departed, this one loaded up with the villagers’ livestock.”⁹¹ Afterwards, the women and children were also removed.⁹² This suggests that livestock seizures took precedence over human capture. Farm statistics appear similarly imprecise. For example, Table 1, which is based on a report from the Ministry of Martyrs and Anfal Affairs, highlights barley, lentils, and wheat in its tally of plundered harvests.

Table 1: Looting of Goods and Harvest⁹³

Vegetable Farms	Fruits Farms	Barley	Wheat	Lentils	Chickpeas
42883	26826	224254	271806	13203	18504

Yet, Table 1 lacks information on corn and rice, which were widely produced in Kurdish rural areas. It is unknown whether these grains were included in the wheat estimates, but both these and the barley estimates appear low given the number of villages and harvests in a region known, after all, as the *breadbasket of Iraq*. Furthermore, the rural Kurds were well-known for various industrial and agricultural products not included in the Ministry’s estimation report, such as hundreds of different species of wild and highly unusual creatures and plants, as well as sesame seed, oak, walnut, sumac, cotton, sugar beet, tobacco, hawthorn, *pistacia atlantica*, rosehip, wool, and beehives.

⁸⁶ Author’s interview with Muhsin Ali Akber in 2017. First mentioned in note 42.

⁸⁷ Salih, *Genocide Culture*, 400.

⁸⁸ Report by a commission of experts from the Iraqi federal movement and Kurdistan Regional Government under the supervision of the Ministry of Martyrs and Anfal Affairs in 2000 (hereafter cited as *Ministry of Martyrs and Anfal Affairs report*). Note that this report is not publicly available; see also Taha Suleiman, *Genocidy Kurd w “Tawana Anfal”* [Genocide of Kurds and Anfal Crimes] (Sulaymaniyah: Hamdi, 2016).

⁸⁹ In 2020, I attempted to contact the Ministry of Martyrs and Anfal Affairs via email, phone, and social media. I then visited the ministry in November 2021 to obtain information regarding undocumented materials and updated data, as well as estimates of the total destruction and confiscations in the Faili and Barzani Kurdish genocides. They failed to respond to my inquiries and emails. Due, in part to irresponsible individuals who permeate institutions and groups, the Kurdish genocides have been largely ignored.

⁹⁰ HRW, *Genocide in Iraq*, 4. First mentioned in note 6.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid., 142.

⁹³ *Ministry of Martyrs and Anfal Affairs report*. First mentioned in note 88.

Furthermore, as Table 2 below shows,⁹⁴ the Ministry estimates included only two types of jewelry: 188,271 kg of gold, and 65,503 kg of silver. According to survivors' accounts, however, this cannot be the correct figure: "While city women do not receive that much gold from their husbands when they marry, village women did receive Guaberoks,⁹⁵ six pairs of bracelets, earrings, necklaces, rings, and wedding bands, of which I believe the Guaberok alone is over 400grams."⁹⁶ In addition, Kurdish women culturally consumed a great deal of gold: "Girls who grew up and assisted their family with livestock and agriculture were rewarded with gold and animals for themselves. Each woman possessed a distinct type of gold. Additionally, we sewed gold coins onto infants' caps and sometimes even into their hair."⁹⁷ Moreover, Kurdish rural areas were known for having expensive beads and rosaries manufactured from the *pistacia atlantica* tree. In short, a great deal of valuable property seems to be overlooked in the Ministry report.

Table 2: Looting of Equipment, Businesses, and Goods⁹⁸

Agricultural Machinery	Centrifugal WaterPump	Stores	Vehicles	Gold	Silver
85250	3229	2532	10499	188271	65503

Another missing item is the trees. According to the Suleimani Statistics Institution, in that city alone, there were 1,155,700 productive trees in 1986. After the Anfal genocide, only 597,000 trees remained, the other 558,700 have been intentionally uprooted in the process of destroying the delicate rainforest. The same study by Iraqi experts estimated the damages at \$8,000,000,000, though it only asked the Iraqi government for \$5,000,000,000 compensation. According to Vala Fareed, one of the experts who wrote the Ministry of Martyrs and Anfal Affairs study and the current Minister of State for the Kurdistan Region, the Iraqi government has, to date, neither compensated the victims nor apologized for these crimes.⁹⁹

Evidently, these estimates of Kurdish losses are far from perfect; nevertheless, looting in the Anfal genocide was clearly effective, contributing enormously to the destruction of Kurdish society and the augmentation of the perpetrators' economic capital.

Economic Capital Rewards

This latter factor is another overlooked aspect of the Kurdish Anfal genocide: it, and the attendant destruction of Kurdish identity, empowered the perpetrators through economic capital and helped reengineer their own identities.¹⁰⁰ Pierre Bourdieu defines economic capital as the resources available to agents in the form of financial assets and properties.¹⁰¹ The accumulation of economic capital through legalized plundering and confiscation, or the *spoils of war*, is an explicit feature of the Kurdish genocides in Iraq. In genocide, perpetrators often built their own identities while destroying those of the targeted groups. Spoliation and confiscation are the most important and effective tools by which perpetrators achieve this combination of destruction and self-construction.¹⁰²

Bourdieu further suggests that class conflict is a perpetual competition between the dominant power and those they subordinate, generated by the struggle over limited economic

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ This is a long thick chain with oval blooms on each chain, sewn onto Kurdish custom vests.

⁹⁶ Author's interview with Khadija Roastem in 2017. First mentioned in note 73.

⁹⁷ Cheman Fatah, interview by author, Kurdistan, 2017.

⁹⁸ *Ministry of Martyrs and Anfal Affairs report*. First mentioned in note 88.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Salih, *Genocide Culture*, 45–46. First mentioned in note 9.

¹⁰¹ Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 14.

¹⁰² Kurt, *The Political Micro-Economy*. First mentioned in note 4.

resources and cultural capital.¹⁰³ The Ba'ath regime showed considerable skill in generating and institutionalizing class conflict among the Kurds. It valued ethnic and tribal ties and cultural practices “that separated Persian Shia from Iraqi Arab Shia and Kurd from Kurd. Party circulars during the Iran–Iraq war praised the tribes for their cultural values, stressing valor, honor, manhood, courage, and military prowess.”¹⁰⁴

Ethnic conflict has historically assisted every Iraqi regime in consolidating control over the Kurds, through confiscation and capital accumulation by state and non-state actors. Thus, the Kurds had already faced confiscation and looting for decades even before Saddam began to transfer their properties to Arabs in Khanaqin and Kirkuk. Even if they were not unprecedented, however, these transfers were systematic and wide-ranging. In a recent interview, the former director of the intelligence agency in Kirkuk in 1979–1990 admitted that Arab families who agreed to leave the south of Iraq and move to Kurdistan changed their family book registration locations and settled in Kirkuk. Every family that moved received 10,000 Iraqi dinars (at the time, worth about US\$30,000) as well as property and farmland.¹⁰⁵ Most of these properties and farms had belonged to forcibly deported Kurds, and it was the possibility of capital accumulation that attracted many people to the policy.

Extensive documentation shows that local Arabs in the Kirkuk district also confiscated Kurdish property. This suggests that the state's legalization and pursuit of looting encouraged ordinary non-Kurds to loot and confiscate Kurdish properties, perhaps as a direct result of having internalized state-promoted policy. This likely turned the looting and oppression of the Kurdish population into a normative cultural practice.¹⁰⁶ In fact, as recently as 2019, some 200 ordinary Arab Sunni citizens raided the Sargaran sub-district in Kirkuk and took over properties owned by Kurdish families.¹⁰⁷

Additionally, the Iraqi regime long attempted to create internal conflict among the Kurds. This objective was attained through the legalization of pillage and the promise of capital gains for Jash militia leaders. Each such leader possessed political power only within Kurdish territory; they were “responsible for espionage, ensuring that no anti-Government opinions were voiced, and no anti-Government activities were attempted by the local Kurdish population.”¹⁰⁸ Besides capital, the Jash leaders also received residences, training and meeting facilities, and administrative offices. Moreover, on August 9, 1988, in Republican decree 807, Saddam awarded medals of valor to a group of Jash leaders for their participation in the Anfal genocide. Furthermore, the political and economic capital of these Jash leaders were easily converted into social capital, giving them followers and influence, a network, and membership in the Ba'ath party—as Bourdieu remarks, social and economic capital are convertible.¹⁰⁹ Besides the funds they received from the Ba'ath regime to manage their troops and members, the economic capital obtained from espionage and confiscation helped divide Kurdish society into a dominant minority and a subordinate majority. The presence of the Jash militia increased fear and uncertainty among the Kurdish population, as exemplified in the famous Kurdish phrase “dar w diwar gwyra dare”—the trees and walls have ears.

¹⁰³ Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

¹⁰⁴ Robert O. Freedman, *The Middle East Enters the Twenty-first Century* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2002), 11.

¹⁰⁵ UTV, “Saddam Hussein yuhaqiq mae erys laylat zafatih alliwa' tariq mutaeab 'ahmad fi 'iifadat khasat mae alduktur hamid eabd allh,” [Saddam Hussein is investigating a groom on his wedding night. Major General Tariq Miteb Ahmed in private testimony with Dr. Hamid Abdullah], YouTube video, 52:12, uploaded Jan 29, 2021, accessed March 13, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HQqtd_oG-7c.

¹⁰⁶ See Salih, *Genocide Culture*, 396–400. First mentioned in note 9.

¹⁰⁷ Sangar Ali, “Kurdish Village Fears ‘Demographic Change’ as Hundreds Come to Unlawfully Claim Land,” *Kurdistan 24*, May 14, 2019, accessed March 13, 2023, <https://www.kurdistan24.net/en/story/19634-VIDEO:-Kurdish-village-fears-%E2%80%98demographic-change%E2%80%99-as-hundreds-come-to-unlawfully-claim-land>.

¹⁰⁸ United Kingdom (UK) Border & Immigration Agency, “Country of Origin Information Report: Iraq” (London: Research, Development and Statistics (RDS), UK Home Office, 2007), 237.

¹⁰⁹ Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, 14. First mentioned in note 101.

In the end, however, the Ba'ath miscalculated in attempting to put an end to the Kurds by committing the Anfal genocide, destroying their villages, and *Jashnizing* Kurdish society with the power of economic capital. The same events stoked the simmering resentment that prompted rural revolutions to move to urban areas—the Anfal genocide was, in fact, the impetus for the 1991 Kurdish uprising.

Conclusion

The hitherto understudied Anfal genocide against the Kurds in Iraq, which started in the early 1980s and lasted until 1989, was committed with multidimensional objectives and resulted in multidimensional consequences. Economic capital figured prominently among these objectives. Through the legalization of plunder and confiscation, and the deployment of prospect theory, the regime maximized its gains, or the *spoils of war*, by looting the victims, while also minimizing its losses, or the expense of the genocide of the Kurds. Since looting is deeply rooted in the cultures of many tribes in the region, the regime accomplished several goals by legalizing it and allowing the perpetrators to keep stolen goods. These includes increasing the wealth of Ba'ath Party supporters, and the perpetrators of the genocide in general; increasing the number of Ba'ath Party supporters, and the perpetrators of the genocide in general; and offering opportunities for personal profit that the regime could justify on religious grounds. The state's political-economic strategy assisted in establishing the Jash militia within Kurdish society, and the militia in turn helped the Ba'ath regime divide Kurdish society into two opposing factions. The plundering and confiscation of Kurdish property in Iraq have been explicit components of every genocide committed against them. Of these, the Anfal genocide was one of the most destructive because its perpetrators gained economically and because it also bolstered the perpetrators' sense of their own identity to create a wealthy, dominant power.

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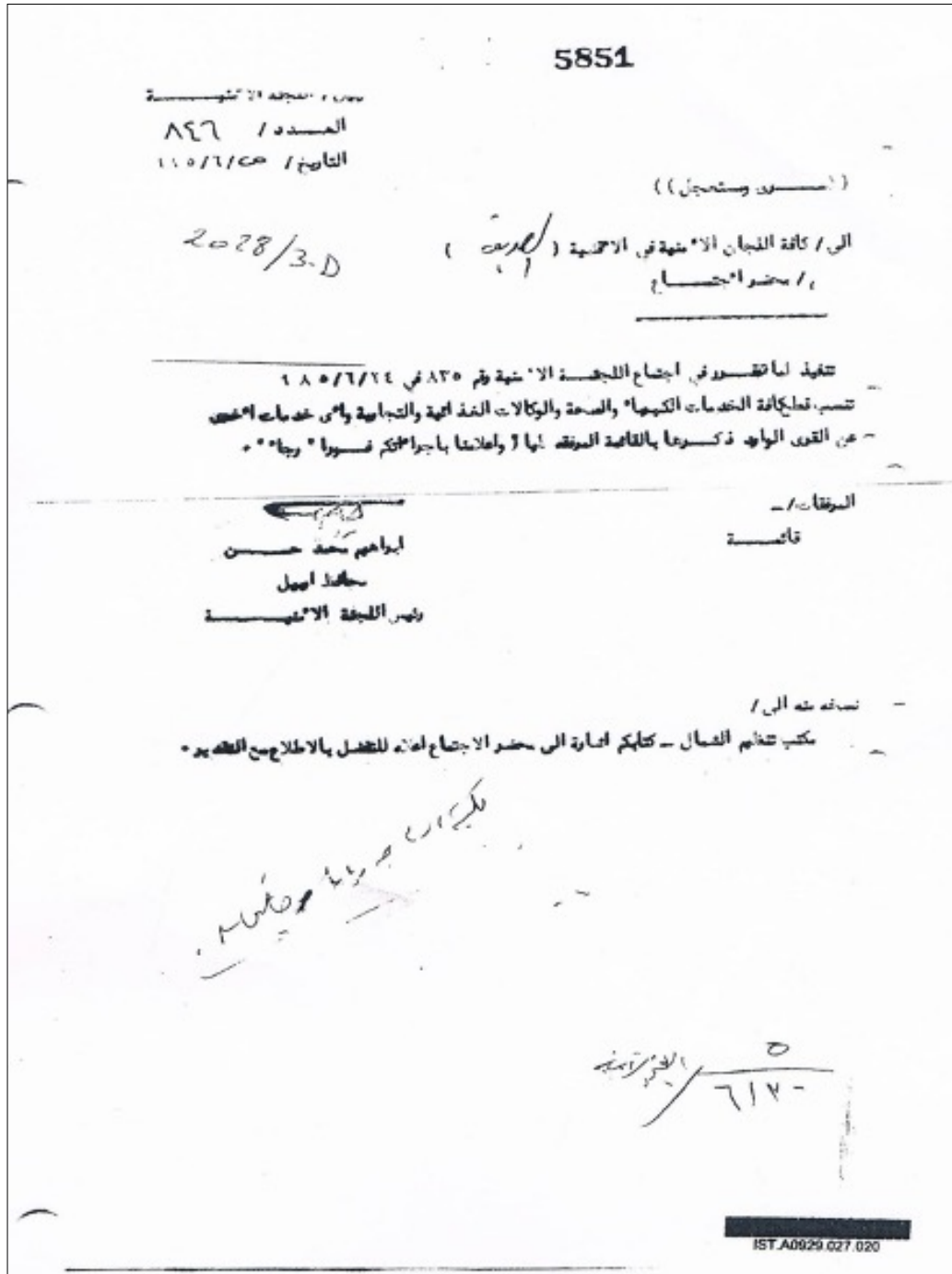
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Appendix No. 1: Iraqi Director of Intelligence Services; document number 835, registration 5851, volume 846, issued on June 24, 1985. Author's archive.



Appendix No. 2: Iraqi genocide policy, from the Ba'ath Northern Bureau Command to the First, Second, and Fifth Command Corps; document number 28/4008, issued on June 21, 1987.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

006161

المحكمة الجنائية العراقية العليا
محكمة الجنايات الثانية
بغداد - العراق

العدد: ١ / ج ثانية / ٢٠٠٦
التاريخ: ٩ / جواني الاخرة / ١٤٢٨
المصادق: ٢٤ / ٦ / ٢٠٠٧

قرار الحكم

٢- يعمل بهذا القرار من تاريخ صدوره .

وهذه الوثيقة موقعة من قبل المدان (صدام حسين) رئيس مجلس قيادة الثورة (المنحل) في ذلك الوقت .

كما اطلعت المحكمة على الوثيقة الصادرة عن مجلس قيادة الثورة (لجنة شؤون الشمال) بالعدد ٤١٥١ في ١٥ / ٦ / ١٩٨٧ والمعونة إلى رئاسة أركان الجيش وموضوعها ترحيل والمتضمنة: (حصلت الموافقة على المقترح الوارد بكتباكم أعلاه وتؤكد على ترحيل كافة عوائل المخربين إليهم وحسب الضوابط المعمول بها سابقاً).

وهذه الوثيقة موقعة من قبل المتهم طاهر توفيق العاني والذي كان يشغل منصب سكرتير لجنة شؤون الشمال .

كذلك اطلع المحكمة على البرقية الصادرة عن قيادة مكتب تنظيم الشمال والمعونة إلى قيادة الفيلق الأول وقيادة الفيلق الثاني وقيادة الفيلق الخامس وإلى رئاسة أركان الجيش ومديرية الاستخبارات العسكرية العامة - رقم المنشأ ٤٠٠٨ والمتضمنة ((بالنظر لانتهاء الفترة المعلنة رسمياً لتجميع القرى المحذورة أمنياً والتي سينتهي موعدها يوم ٢١ / ٦ / ١٩٨٧ قررنا العمل ابتداء من يوم ٢١ / ٦ / ١٩٨٧ صعوداً بما يلي :


١- تعتبر جميع القرى المحذورة أمنياً ، والتي لم تزال لحد الآن أماكن لتواجد المخربين عملاء إيران وسبلي الخيانة وأمثالهم من خونة العراق .

٢- يحرم التواجد البشري والحيواني فيها نهائياً وتعتبر منطقة عمليات محرمة ويكون الرمي فيها حراً غير مقيداً بأية تعليمات مالم تصدر من مقرنا .

٣- يحرم السفر منها ولها أو الزراعة أو الاستثمار الزراعي أو الصناعي والحيواني وعلى جميع الأجهزة المختصة متابعة هذا الموضوع بجدية كل حين لاختصاصه .

(٩٦٣-٢٤٦)

الرئيس



Appendix No. 2, continued.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

006385

المحكمة الجنائية العراقية العليا
مكتبه الجنائيات الثانية
بغداد - العراق

العدد: ١ / ج ثانية / ٢٠٠٦
التاريخ: ٩ / جمادى الآخرة / ١٤٢٨
الصفحة: ٢٤ / ٩ / ٢٠٠٧

قرار الحكم

٣- يحرم السفر منها ولبيها أو للزراعة والاستثمار الزراعي أو للصناعي والحيواني وعلى جميع الأجهزة المختصة متابعة هذا الموضوع بجدية كل ضمن اختصاصه.

٤- تعد قيادات الفيلق ضربات خاصة بين فترة وأخرى بالمنفعية والسميات والطائرات لقتل أكبر عدد ممكن ممن يتواجد ضمن هذه المحرمات وخلال جميع الأوقات ليلاً ونهاراً.

٥- يحجز جميع من يلقي القبض عليه لتواجده ضمن قرى هذه المنطقة وتحقق معه الأجهزة الأمنية وينفذ حكم الإعدام بمن يتجاوز صره (١٥) سنة داخل صعوداً إلى عمر (٧٠) سنة داخل بعد الاستفادة من معلوماته.

٦- تقوم الأجهزة المختصة بالتحقيق مع من يسلم نفسه إلى الأجهزة الحكومية أو الحزب لمدة أقصاها ثلاثة أيام وإذا تطلب الأمر لحد عشرة أيام لا بد من إعلاننا عن هذه الحالات وإذا استوجب التحقيق أكثر من هذه المدة عليهم اخذ موافقتنا أو برفقاً وعن طريق الزليق (طاهر توفيق العاني).


٧- يعتبر كل ما يحصل عليه مستشارو الفوج للدفاع الوطني أو مقاتلهم يؤول إليهم ما عدا الأسلحة الثقيلة والسادة والمتوسطة لما الأسلحة الخفيفة فتقى ويتم إعلاننا بأعداد هذه الأسلحة فقط.

هذه الوثيقة موقعه من قبل معاون مدير لمن محافظة (أربيل).

كذلك اطلعت المحكمة على البرقية الصادرة من مركز استخبارات كلار والمعونون إلى مركز استخبارات السليمانية ومركز استخبارات الشرقية المتقدم ومركز استخبارات الشرقية / الشعبة الثالثة / رقم المنشأ (٢٢٦٨) في ١/٦/١٩٨٧ والمتضمنة: ((.... بالساعة ١٠٠٠ من يوم ١/٦/ تم هدم القرى التالية بوساطة دبابات ك دب الحكم و ٢ بط منفعية وبدلالة مرصد جوي دهك كوره، كالي زد، بوه، دو كهل، زرين، زردو

الرئيس

(٢٧٠-٩٦٣)



Appendix No. 3: Military Intelligence Directorate to the Eastern Region Intelligence Office; document number 5940 /M1, S3, Q2, issued on March 14, 1987.

٢٩٤ / ١٤
١٤ / ١٤

004536

مديرية الاستخبارات العسكرية
الجنوبية

سري للغاية وشخصي

المرافق
١٠٠ ٠٠٠ / ١

تسبب ترحيل كافة القرى الطابحة لناحية لادركم والجهة في الثلاثة
المرافق
• ترحيل الاطفال وطابحة مراحل الترحيل اولا " باقول ويرود الفعل والاطلاق

المرافقات
١) لائحة

المعيد الزين

مديرية الاستخبارات العسكرية العامة

2104
#12
R (2 pages)

اجابة المرسلة بتاريخ
١٤ آذار ١٩٨٧

(١-١)
سري للغاية وشخصي

IST.A0929.070.076

Appendix No. 3, continued.

سرى للغاية وشخصي

اللقب يا* سماء القرى التابعة لناحية لادركرم والضميمه فرجيلها 004537

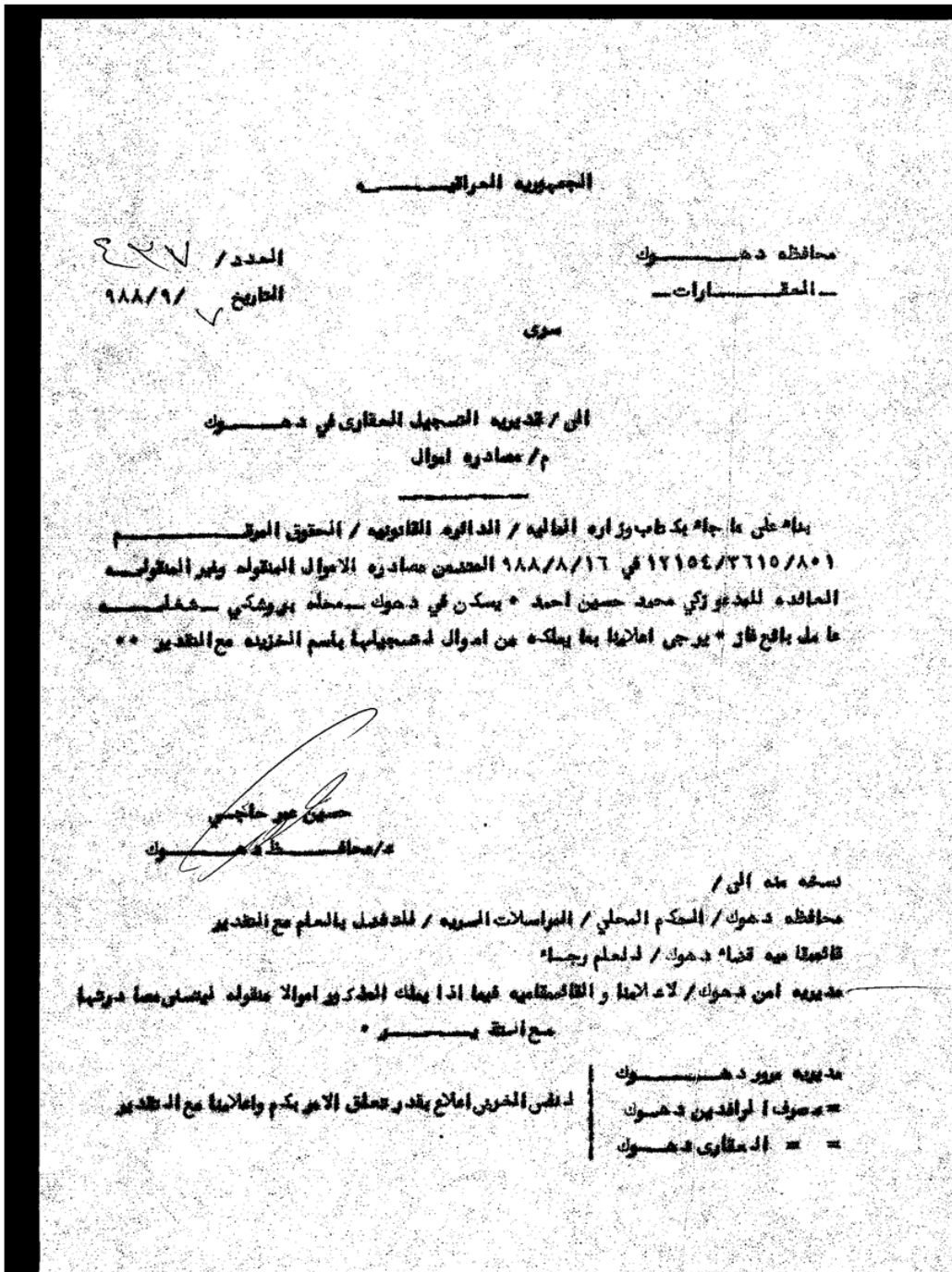
٠٢ قرية للغالو المصري (٧٢٨٢)	٠١ قرية للغالو الكبير (٦٩٨٤)
٠٤ قرية جاله دوانسه (٧٨٨١)	٠٢ قرية مله ناصر (٧٤٨٠)
٠٦ قرية كهور مردطي خان بكه (٨١٨٦)	٠٥ قرية كوره مورد السلفي (٨١٨٥)
٠٨ قرية جـساش (٧٨٨٩)	٠٧ قرية شيخ جلال (٨٢٨٤)
٠١٠ قرية صهي ري (٨٩٩٠)	٠٩ قرية مسك (٨٨٨٦)
٠١٢ قرية تليل دلوه غوريه (٩٠٩٢)	٠١١ قرية نل آره شوركه (٩١٩٢)
٠١٤ قرية جبه سوركوه (٨٩٩٥)	٠١٣ قرية نليل جولك (٩١٩٤)
٠١٦ قرية قره جهور (٨٤٩٢)	٠١٥ قرية طي آره (٨٧٩٦)
٠١٨ قرية زوده (٨٠٩٦)	٠١٧ قرية طي مصطفى (٨١٩٤)
٠٢٠ قرية نيلوز (٧٢٩٢)	٠١٩ قرية بار باروله (٧٥٩٢)
٠٢٢ قرية لادريوس (٧٢٩٧)	٠٢١ قرية داروه سر (٧٢٩٢)
٠٢٤ قرية صه سوز (٦٨٩٢)	٠٢٣ قرية جيمسن (٧٠٠٠)
٠٢٦ قرية صالحسي (٦٦٩٧)	٠٢٥ قرية تام مشه (٦٨٩٦)
٠٢٨ قرية خنبر بولا غ (٦٢٠٢)	٠٢٧ قرية بيسداره (٦٥٩٩)
٠٢٠ قرية لسقاره (٦٢٠٥)	٠٢٩ قرية صه لسو (٥٩٠٢)
٠٢٢ قرية حسن جان (٧٢٠٢)	٠٣١ قرية شورجه (٦٩٠٥)
٠٢٤ قرية محط بيزره (٨١٠١)	٠٣٣ قرية حصك (٧٦٠٢)
٠٢٦ قرية سياه منصور (٦٦٠٦)	٠٣٥ قرية بيسزل (٧٤٠٢)
٠٢٨ قرية طرساره (٥٨٩٩)	٠٣٧ قرية قرلسان (٦٠٠٧)
٠٤٠ قرية بيا ليسي (٥٦٠٠)	٠٣٩ قرية سلوكسان (٥٧٩٨)

2104
#12
R (2 pages)

(١-١)
سرى للغاية وشخصي

IST.A0929.070.077

Appendix No. 4: City of Dohuk Real Estate Department to Mayor of Dohuk District / Secret Unit; document number 426, issued on August 30, 1988. Document details the confiscation of the “movable and unmovable properties” of the citizen Zaki Yassin Mahmud on May 14, 1988.



Appendix No. 5: Order for the detention of people and demolition of their shops in Sulaymaniyah, authorized by policy number 18485, issued on December 1, 1988; document number 7026, dated February 12, 1988.

المصدر ٧٠٤٦
 ائت ٩٨٨١١٤/١٤
 ١٠-١٥
 كمانه المارتيا
 له ايه شقلاوه اسما

اعلمنا انه ابلية بوجهه كتابا المرقم ١٨٤٨٥ في ١١/١٢/١٩٨٨
 بانه هطلت مواقفه قياده قلته تنظيم الشك بيان هجر اشخاصه
 بحافظه اليمانية تسببه لارتكاب عملياته جبانة قام بها احمد الغلاز
 وهيه اغتيال صايط عسيري برتبة ملازم اوله قرب محلاتهم في
 مدينة اليمانية والا بل وضعه حالات التضاقت المقعود
 اذ غير المقعود قننتم هدم محلاتهم واقترعت ايه الحكم الرائي
 بدم لمدة ستة اشهر وهطلت مواقفه قياده الملتية على المقدم
 دنيا الرنية النافل على هذا الجبهه نايله : المواقفه على في
 المذكورين لمدة ستة اشهر في صانظ المشرو وهكذا يتم التضاقت
 مع الامارات المحانله للاطلاع والعلك بوجهه قبا الى الامارات
 والاصا ر صايط

محمد احمد الغلاز
 مدير المارتيا
 رقم ٧٠٤٦
 ١٩٨٨/١٢/١٤

Appendix No. 6: Resolution No. 666 of the Revolutionary Command Council, signed by Saddam Hussein, ordering the foreignization and deportation of the Failis; dated July 5, 1980.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

رقم القرار / ٦٦٦
تاريخ القرار / ١٩٨٠/٥/٧


**مجلس
قيادة الثورة**
قرار

استنادا الى أحكام الفقرة (آ) من المادة الثانية والاربعين من الدستور المؤقت
 مجلس قيادة الثورة بجلسته المنعقدة بتاريخ ١٩٨٠/٥/٧ ما يلي : -

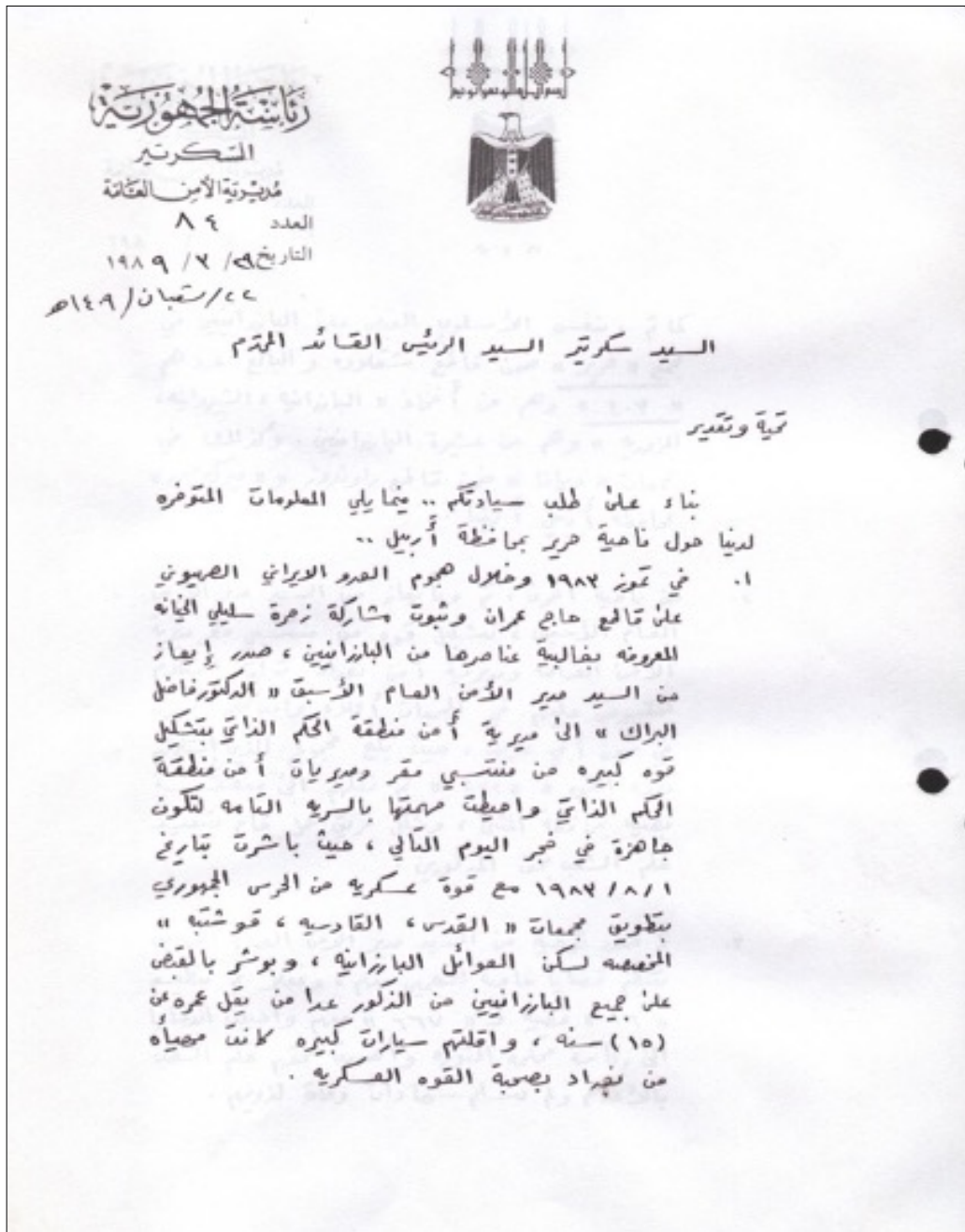
- تسقط الجنسية العراقية عن كل عراقي من اصل اجنبي اذا تبين عدم ولائه
 للوطن والشعب والاهداف القومية والاجتماعية العليا للثورة .

- على وزير الداخلية ان يأمر بابعاد كل من اسقطت عنه الجنسية العراقية
 بموجب الفقرة (١) ما لم يقتنع ببناء على اسباب كافية بأن بقاءه في العراق
 أمر تستدعيه ضرورة قضائية او قانونية او حفظ حقوق الغير الموثقة رسمياً .

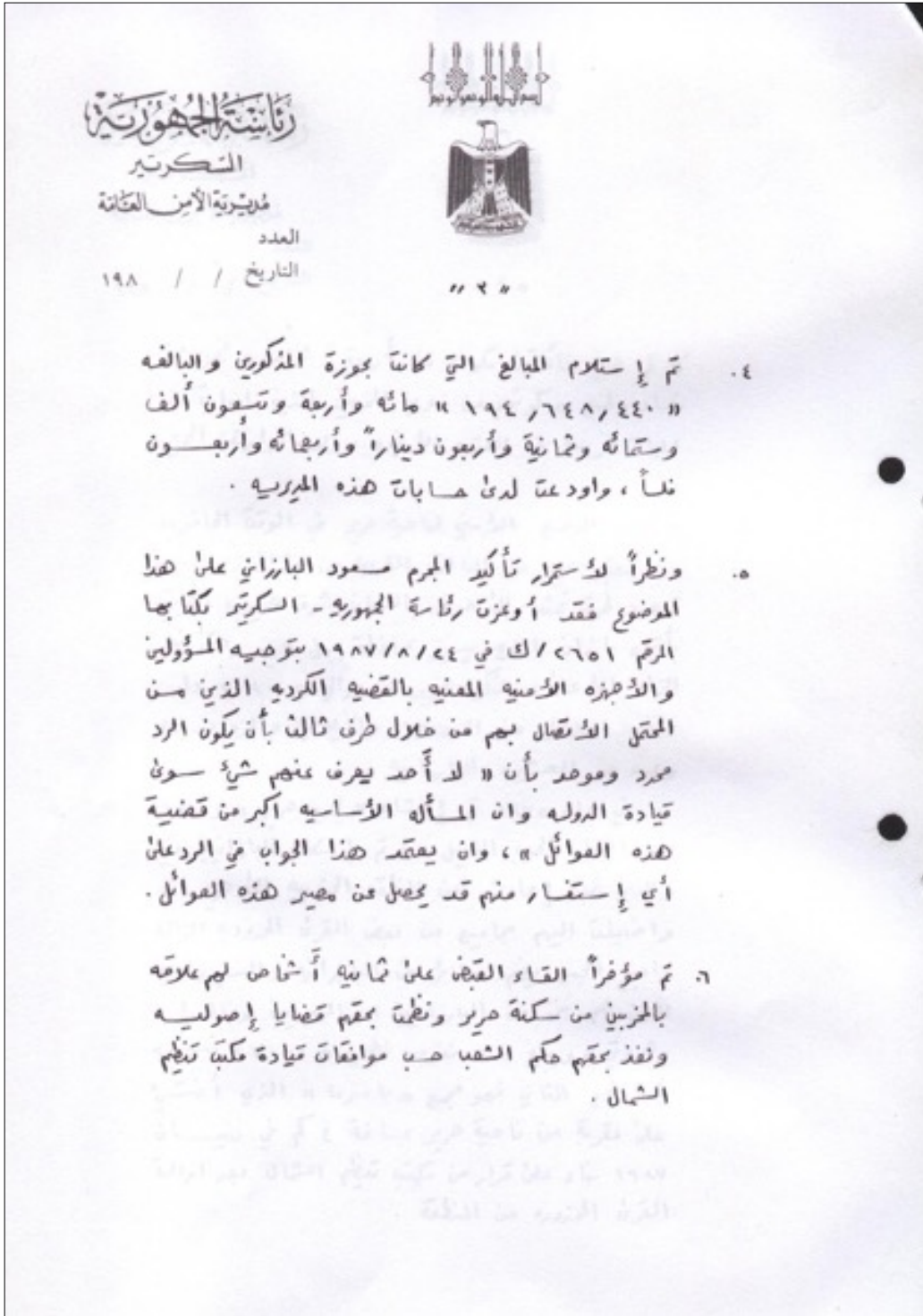
- يتولى وزير الداخلية تنفيذ هذا القرار .

صدام حسين
رئيس مجلس قيادة الثورة

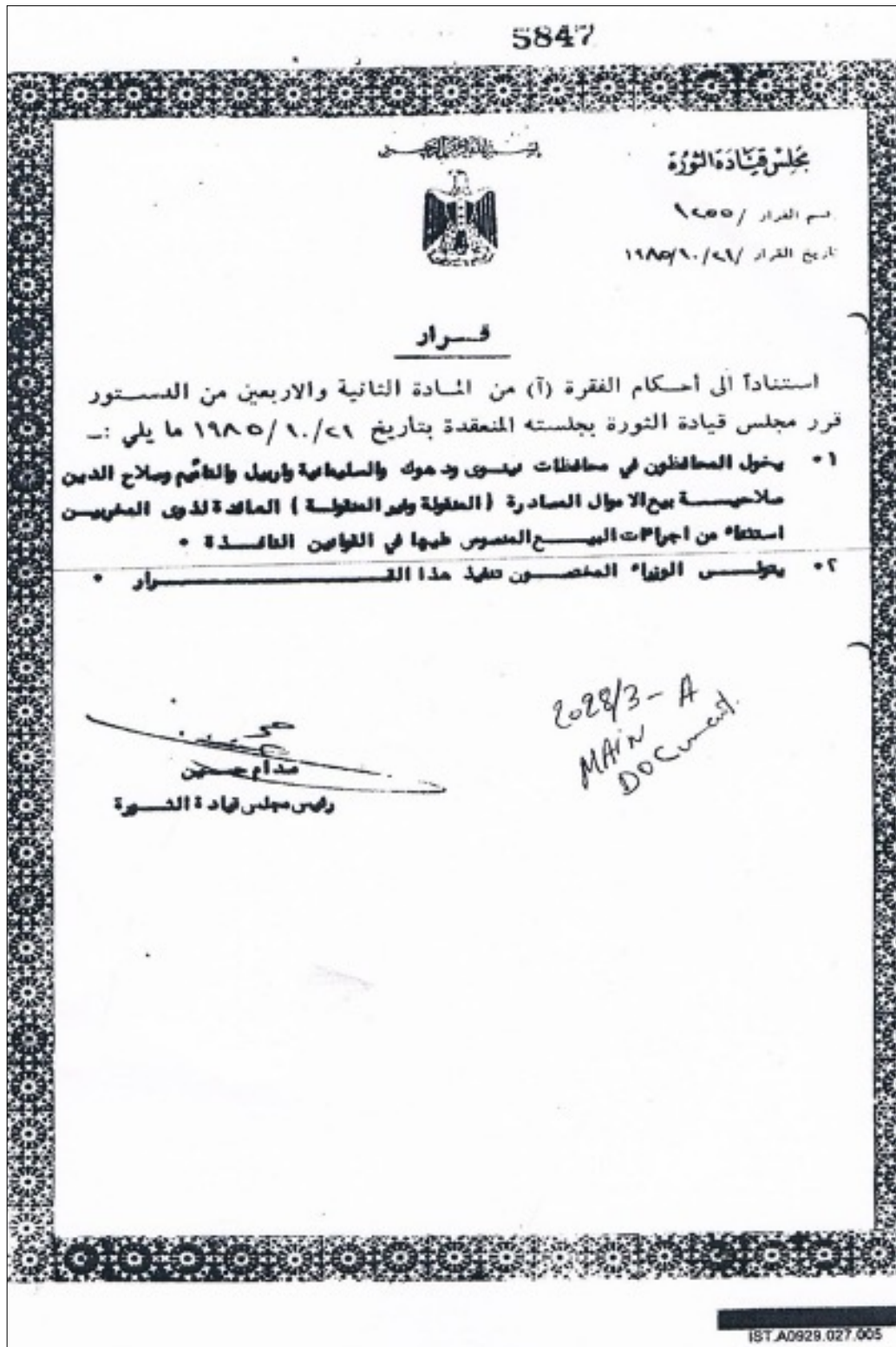
Appendix No. 7: Order for the confiscation and looting of the Barzani victims of genocide in 1983 at the hands of the Iraqi Republican Guards; document number 84; issued by the Republican Guards Directorate on March 29, 1989.



Appendix No. 7, continued.



Appendix No. 8: Looting policy signed by Saddam Hussein; document number 1255, issued on October 21, 1985.



Appendix No. 9: Resolution 18/2396 on the confiscation of the Kurds' properties, ordered by Ali Hassan al-Majid; issued on April 6, 1987.

