

Section :
Patterns of displacement
Sub-section :
General

**Eviction of Kurds but also of Turkmen and Assyrians
from the Kirkuk area (1997–2002)**

- Since 1997, Iraqi government forced Kurds, as well as a number of Turkmen and Assyrians to leave the Kirkuk area as part of its policy of "arabization" or "nationalization" of this oil-rich region
- Most of the people expelled from Kirkuk decided to go north, despite government decree that doing so would cause them to lose their property and food rationing cards
- 5–6 families are deported every day to northern Iraq
- Families perceived to be opposed to the regime, families who have relatives outside Iraq or in southern Iraq and those who have relatives in detention or executed are said to be the first targeted in the process of forced displacement
- Baath Party members are responsible for ordering the eviction of families viewed as opponents of the Iraqi regime
- Kurdish sources reported acceleration of forced displacement of non-Arabs citizens in 2001 and 2002

"Since mid-1997 thousands of Kurds and a number of other non-Arabs, including Turkmen and Assyrians, who have lived all their lives in the Kirkuk region, which is about 260 kilometers north of Baghdad, have been expelled to the Kurdish provinces in the north controlled by the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) because of their ethnic origin and because of Kirkuk's strategic location as well as its oil fields. The authorities have given Kurdish families targeted the choice of either going to Southern Iraq or to the Kurdish provinces. If the families choose Southern Iraq then they are allowed to take some of their possessions with them. However, if they choose to go to the north their properties, as well as their food rationing cards are confiscated by the authorities. The majority of the families have reportedly chosen to go north. [...]"

Once in Northern Iraq some of the families expelled tried to live with relatives. The majority, however, have been resettled in camps such as the al-Salam camp near Chamchamal and Benislawa camp near Erbil. The KDP, PUK and UN agencies have provided them with basic food, tents, blankets and other items. Their empty properties in the Kirkuk region and in Khanaqīn are given by the authorities to pro-government Arabs brought from other regions in Iraq. Thus far thousands of Arabs from other regions in Iraq have been resettled in the Kirkuk governorate." (AI 24 November 2000, "Forcible expulsion")

"The policy of the Iraqi government is very systematically implemented in and around Kirkuk. Everyday 5-6 families are deported to Northern Iraq." (UNHCR/ACCORD 14 November 2000, p.57)

"Kurds and Turkomans who settled in these places after the 1950s are the principal victims of this policy. Kurdish and Turkoman families are required to move either to the southern part of the country, often to the city of al-Ramadi, or to the three northern governorates. At the same time, Arabs are reportedly encouraged to settle in Kirkuk; their proportion is increasing. According to the interviewees, Arabs are given incentives of money and apartments to settle in Kirkuk. As such, the Government's policy of Arabization, as reported by the Special Rapporteur [of the Commission on Human Rights on the Situation of Human Rights in Iraq] in the past, is continuing. [...]

Families who are perceived to be opposed to the regime, families who have relatives outside Iraq or in southern Iraq and those who have relatives in detention or executed are said to be the first targeted in the process of forced displacement." (CHR 10 March 1998, "Forced displacement")

"Forced displacement of the Turkomen was reported to have resumed in the last months of 1998, particularly in the Kirkuk area. The head of the coalition of the Turkoman parties stated that about 5,000 evicted Turkomans were living in 'sub-human conditions in Northern Iraq.'" (UNHCR June 2000, p.12)

In 2000 "The government continued its forced expulsion of Kurds and Turkmen from Kirkuk, Khaniqin, Makhmour, Sinjar, Tuz Khormatu, and other districts as part of its 'Arabization' program.[...] Over 800 people were reportedly expelled between January and June, bringing the total number of those expelled since 1991 to over 94,000, according to Kurdish opposition sources." (HRW December 2000, "Human Rights Developments")

In 2001 "Iraqi authorities have forcefully deported five Kurdish families in Tuze Khurmatoo south of Kirkuk city. Their documents were ceased and their houses were expropriated and given to Arab families. The families were asked to register as Arabs or face deportation to the areas controlled by the Kurdish authorities. The deportees who arrived in Kurdistan asked UN to pressure Iraqi government to allow them back to their land and to halt further deportation activities. The deportees numbered 33 persons, all

from the farm lands near Tuze Khurmatoo." (Kurdistan Observer 26 March 2001)

"Emanuel Khoshaba, an official with the Assyrian Democratic Movement, said that '10 Assyrian families have been forced to move to...Baghdad since the beginning of the year,' according to 'Zinda' on 12 February. The deportation of these families is part of the arabization campaign spearheaded by the ruling Iraqi Ba'th Party." (RFE/RL 15 February 2002)

"The Iraqi government's ethnic-cleansing campaign against the country's non-Arab citizens has accelerated, according to the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) Kurdish-language daily "Kurdistan Nuwe" on 17 April [2002]. "Daily, the Iraqi government further intensifies the policy of ethnic cleansing and deportation of Kurds in the regions under its own control," reported "Kurdistan Nuwe." The article continues, "Whenever the global problems become more intricate and more threatening, the Iraqi government finds it an opportune time to further implement its schemes against the Iraqi people in general and the Kurdish people in particular.[...]"

'On 5 January 2002, [Saddam Husain's] Presidency Council issued a directive through the Interior Ministry, to the Kirkuk Governorate in which it called for probing into the causes of death of all the Kurdish citizens from 1991 to 1996 in Kirkuk, for the purpose of expelling...the families and relatives of the Kurds who were martyred in the battles for liberating Kirkuk..., ' the report said. The battles for liberating Kirkuk refer to the brief seizure of Kirkuk by Iraqi Kurdish forces during the abortive March 1991 Kurdish uprising." (RFE/RL 26 April 2002)

For more information on forced displacement from Kirkuk, please see:

Zanger, Maggy. "Refugees in Their Own Country, War Without Borders," *Middle East Report* 222 (spring 2002) [[External Link](#)]

Sources:

Amnesty International (AI), 24 November 1999, Victims of systematic repression [[Internet](#)]

Human Rights Watch (HRW), December 2000, World Report 2001: Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan [[Internet](#)]

Kurdish Observer, 26 March 2001, Iraq Continues Deporting Kurds [[Internet](#)]

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), 26 April 2002, Iraq Report, Volume 5, Number 11 [[Internet](#)]

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), 15 February 2002, "Iraq Forcing Assyrians out of Kirkuk" in Iraq Report, Volume 5, Number 6 [[Internet](#)]

United Nations Commission on Human Rights (CHR), 10 March 1998, Report on the situation of human rights in Iraq, submitted by the Special Rapporteur, Mr. Max van der Stoep, E/CN.4/1998/67 [[Internet](#)]

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), June 2000, Background Paper on Refugees and Asylum Seekers from Iraq [[Internet](#)]

UNHCR/ACCORD, 14 November 2000, 6th European Country of Origin Information Seminar [[Internet](#)].