

Did the Kurdish people play any role in murdering Armenians in the beginning of the last century?

As the Kurdish reader and intellectual, you may be surprised by this question since it was the Ottoman Turks under the leadership of Sultan Abdul-Hameed the Second, who were evidently involved in committing the mass genocide against the Armenian people, not the Kurds. However, we should stop by this question and be faithful to the history as well as be critical of the role of some Kurdish tribes in Anatolia who had been deceived by religious slogans and had taken the wrong camp and fought against the Armenians. It is highly significant to do so because on the one hand, we should prove to the world that the overwhelming majority of the Kurdish people in Anatolia were sympathetic to the Armenian cause, and they had condemned the mass genocide. On the other hand, we should tell the world that those who were recruited to the so-called Al-Hameedi regiments, among the Kurdish tribes and had participated in carrying out the genocide should not represent the Kurdish population as a whole. We should tell the international community that it was the Ottoman Turks, who had orchestrated and carried out the Armenian Holocaust, and had blood on their hands. The ultra-nationalist politicians as well as intellectuals in Turkey attempt to save the bad record of the Ottoman Empire and cause the damage to the reputation of the Kurdish people, by fabricating the allegations against the Kurdish people and accusing them of committing the Armenian Holocaust. It is simply an attempt to deform the facts and take them out of their historical context.

The answer and the discussion of the question will be based on my translation of an article, which was written by Hoshang Aosi and published in Al-Hayat, the Arabic-London based newspaper on June 10 2008. I hope that will help the reader and the Kurdish intellectuals to refute the Turkish allegations, and to be critical of the facts that I depend on. Due to the fact of the poorness of the Kurdish archive, it has been difficult for the historians to find out whether the involvement of the Kurdish tribes in the Armenian Holocaust was based on the national hostility to the Armenian people, or it was fuelled by their religious zeal. According to the article, the Ottoman Muslim army to which thousands of Muslim Kurds, Arabs, Georgians and Azeri had belonged was involved in 11 bloody wars with Russian Christian Army from 17th century until 1917. Those bloody wars had taken place on the Kurdish soil in Anatolia, which means that they had contributed to destabilizing the Kurdish part of Turkey and destroying its villages and making it hard for the Kurdish intellectuals to write down the events and preserve them in the archives.

The Kurdistan Newspaper, the first ever-Kurdish official newspaper, which was established by Mr. Mikdad Methat Bader Khan on April 22 1898 in Cairo Egypt, where its first five No were published. The Kurdistan Newspaper had played a crucial role in strengthening the national consciousness of the Kurdish people in general, and helping the Kurdish intellectuals and elite to enlighten themselves, and be aware about the history of their people. The Kurdistan Newspaper is a reliable source in which we can find the Kurdish elite or leader's views on the Armenian genocide, and to what extent the Kurdish people had been involved. However, before my endeavour to clarify the role of the Newspaper in revealing the truth, I will mention briefly some information about the Kurdistan Newspaper due to its cultural as well as historical significance for the Kurdish intellectuals.

The publishing of the Kurdistan News paper in Cairo was banned, after the Ottoman officials in Istana had put a great pressure on the family of Mohammad Ali, the ruler of Egypt to shut down the Newspaper. The Newspaper re-established its mission in Geneva Switzerland, where its next four No had seen a day light. The No 20 until No 23 of the Kurdistan were issued in Cairo again after, the Egyptian officials had left the ban on the Newspaper. The No 24 was issued in London, and from the No 25 until 29, was issued in Folkston, south of London .The No 30 and 31 were issued again in Geneva. All numbers of the Kurdistan except No 10,12,17,18 and 19 have been well preserved at the library of Marwork in Germany.

The above-mentioned facts about the Newspaper will lead us to believe that this half-monthly Newspaper whose chief editor was Mikdad Methat Bader Khan and later his Brother Adul-Rahman Bader Khan, and whose paper size was (32, 5 25, 5), was issued from April 22 1898 until April 14 1902. In his opening columns, as the chief editor of the Kurdistan Newspaper, Mr- Adul-Rahman Bader Khan had warned the Kurdish people on not being involved in the fighting against Armenian people. He had vigorously condemned the massacre, and his columns had contributed to revealing to the world that the Kurdish people in Turkey in general and the Kurdish elite in particular was not supporting the Ottoman Turks in their brutal action against the Armenian people.

Mr. Bader Khan had repeated his warnings and affirmed the Armenian issue and the rights of the Armenian people should be respected, even before the massacre had reached its peak in 1915-1917). In his column in the No 27 of the Kurdistan Newspaper, Mr. Bader Khan had referred to the statement of Sheik Abed-Allah Al-Nahri, the leader of the Kurdish uprising in 1880, in which Al-Nahri had shown the rejection of the Kurdish participation in the fight against the Armenian people. Sheik-Al-Nahri had declared his rebellion against Sultan- Abdul-Hameed when he had rejected the order of the Pasha or the ruler of the Van region during the session that was held in Van. Al-Nahri had issued Al-Fatwa or a religious order that had forbidden the blood shed of the Armenian people as well as obliged the Kurdish people to not participating in the fight against Armenian people.

Al- Nahri had affirmed that the order of murdering the innocent Armenian should not be obeyed by the Kurdish people because it was against the Islamic teachings and God's will. Mr- Bader Khan had referred to another part of Al-Nahri's speech during the same session in which he had told the Kurdish delegates that the Armenian people were not your enemies, your true enemies were the heartless Turks who had destroyed your land and villages in their bloody conflict with the Russian Army. In his opening column, in the No 8 of the Kurdistan Newspaper, Mr- Bader Khan had referred to another statement, which was uttered by Al-Nahri. The statement had shown Al-Nahri's deep perception of the Armenians cause and their sufferings, he had addressed the Kurdish audience that " I know some of you had participated in killing the innocent Armenians, and that was happened as the result of the ignorance of some Kurdish tribes of the Islamic teachings, and they had committed a great sin. Those ignorant tribes did not realize that murdering of the Armenians was just like murdering of the Muslims.

Al-Nahri emphasized that the Kurdish religious scholars should take the responsibility for not making the participants of the crime aware about the consequences of their evil act". Mr- Bader Khan had called on the Kurdish people to establish the cooperation with the Armenians and stretching their hands to them by emphasizing, "the Armenian people were suppressed as the Kurdish people and for the sake of their freedom, they had scarified their lives. The ignorant Kurdish tribes did not take care about that, and they had supported the Turks in the fight against the Armenian people, those ignorant should have rejected the order of murdering innocent people like

Armenian, and instead of, they should have supported the Armenian struggle against the Turks". In the opening column of the No 7 of the Kurdistan Newspaper, Mr Bader Khan had highlighted the role of some Armenian nationalists who were living outside the Ottoman controlled areas in launching a campaign against the Turkish suppression of their fellow citizens and establishing an independent Armenian state on the Kurdish territories. The national Armenian state should stretch its border from the north and the south east of Anatolia until Adana and the middle of Anatolia. Mr Bader Khan had also stressed that how the Armenians had become victims of the conflicts between the military super powers; and how the great and strong nations had a willingness to make a concession to the Armenians at the expense of the Kurdish people as well as their territories. In addition to that, there was an Armenian political party, which called the (Tashnak), and it had a strong relation to Russia.

The party was struggling for the national state for the Armenians; it had heavily engaged in an armed - conflict against the Turks in order to achieve their goal. The Ottomans had played a very hypocritical role in exploiting the political circumstances in their favour. On the one hand, they had been able to persuade some Kurdish tribes to look at the Armenians as infidels and as a great threat to the Kurdish territories, and on the other hand, the Ottomans had cheated the Kurdish people and stolen their basic rights in the name of the Islam. However, the intellectuals and well-cultivated Kurds such as the Alavi Kurds, and Yazidi Kurds, and finally some Sunni Muslim Kurdish family like the family of the Bader Khan who had nationalistic views in terms of the Kurdish issue, were aware about the ugly Ottoman policy, and for that reason, they had stayed outside the influence of the Ottomans. In other words, they had strongly condemned the dirty role of some Kurdish tribes in collaborating with the Turks in murdering the Armenians.

Undoubtedly, the Kurdish tribes had participated in the massacre, but their participation was not driven by their national affiliation, it was rather driven by their religious believe as well as their tribal intentions, which was based on the revenge and hatred to the non-Muslims. It is worth mentioning that the Armenian troops had also murdered thousands of the innocent Kurds and forced thousands of them to leave their homes and villages, as revenge against the aggressiveness and the brutality of the Ottoman Army. Unfortunately, the Armenian politicians as well as intellectuals had a poor knowledge about the history and aspiration of the Kurdish people.

More dangerously, they were not aware about the scale of the danger that had encircled them through the international dispute over the territories of the Ottoman Empire; the dispute that had brought about the catastrophes and sufferings for both the Kurdish as well as the Armenian peoples. Apparently, the nature of the political relations the weight of interests between the super-powers such as Germany, the British Empire and France, from one hand, and their relations, individually to the Ottoman Empire on other hand, was greater than the interests and the aspirations of the Kurdish as well as Armenian peoples.

For instance, one should be very critical to the role of Germans in supporting their strategic ally, the Ottomans during the Armenian massacre; one should also condemn the position of the International Community, which had chosen to turn a blind eye to the Armenian Holocaust. One should raise a question, why the International Community had not pursued a hard policy on the Ottomans. It had not done that because, by that time, the Great Britain and France had already reached to an agreement on dividing and sharing the strategic as well as holy places of the southern territories of the Ottoman Empire between them.

The Britons and French had ignored the sufferings of the Kurds and Armenians, and their abandonment of their commitments to respect and implement the Sevres Treaty, in which they had advocated the establishing of the Kurdish and Armenian national states, was a clear evidence of that. They had adopted a League of Nations treaty in 1923, which did not refer to the sufferings of the two nations, and the League had vigorously supported the position of the modern Republic of Turkey, which was founded by Atatürk; and it was built on the ruins of the Ottoman Empire. In the light of what I have mentioned so far, we can conclude that the Kurdish intellectuals and the elite had not contributed to giving a green light to Ottoman Turks to go ahead with their unredeemed crime against the Armenians.

On the contrary, they had condemned it, and they had warned the Kurdish masses on not being engaged in the crime of the genocide and ethnic cleansing of the Armenians. The reader and the international community should not be deceived again by the allegations of the ultra-nationalists in Turkey. We are a peaceful nation, and we have always supported the other nations, in their struggles for the basic rights and freedom. We had supported the Armenians in their struggle since we had shared their sufferings and had paid a great price as many nations did in the Balkans and the Middle East, in the aftermath of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.

References:

Paper by Hoshang Aosi, www.al-hayat.com, 10th of June, 2008

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