

Facts and Figures

In the Turkish State of Emergency region during 1991–96, Turkish military forces burned down thousands of Kurdish villages, leaving them partially or completely depopulated. At the rate of 874 villages destroyed in 1993, 2,374 in 1994 and 95 in 1995, the total figure exceeded 3,500 by 1996.

In Iraq, the 1980s Anfal Campaign alone made 182,000 Kurdish victims, while government forces destroyed 4,500 Kurdish villages and towns.

Pretexts & Consequences

Turkey and Iraq provide the darkest examples of systematic destruction of Kurdish habitats. In Turkey, government forces have burnt villages as well as crops, vineyards and hectares of forest with various methods, including bombings, napalm and bulldozers. Cities such as Sirnak (1992) and Tunceli (1994) suffered mass destruction. In most cases, villagers were not given any compensation and today, live in squalid shantytowns around Istanbul, Izmir, Adana, Mersin, Diyarbakir and elsewhere in Anatolia.

Following the 1980–88 Gulf War, Iraq Ba`th government mounted a series of military operations known as the *Anfal* Campaign. Besides systematic destruction of villages, *Anfal* included mass executions and chemical attacks. Saddam Husain's regime also practiced numerous house demolitions as punishment of Kurds who resisted the regime's vengeful will.

Other State Tools

While directly combating Kurdish dissidents through persecution of their families, the former Iraqi regime also destroyed entire villages as part of an economic blockade against ethnic minorities, dubbed "saboteurs." Another state tool employed to deny Kurds all rights involved confiscating vital documents of Kurdish families prior to their deportation.

In Syria, the 1962 census left 120,000 Kurds stateless, because they could not prove that they had lived in Syria since at least 1935. The census was one component of a comprehensive plan to "arabize" the resource-rich northeastern part of the country, where the majority of non-Arabs are concentrated.

Maintaining a state of emergency for over 40 years, the government refuses to reinstate citizenship to 360,000 Kurdish Syrians stripped of their status since 1962. In addition to the denial of their civic and political rights, the Syrian Kurds are not allowed to own land, houses or businesses. The Kurds in this region do not have the option of relocating to another country, as Syrian authorities do not issue them passports.

The Turkish Republic has maintained a state of emergency (martial law) since 1987 in most of the 11 Kurdish provinces. The Turkish Constitution (Article 15) stipulates that, in times of war, mobilisation, *martial law*, or *state of emergency*, the exercise of fundamental rights and freedoms can be partially or entirely suspended. In November 2002, the 15-year state of emergency was lifted in the last two provinces of Diyarbakir and Sirnak.

The "village protectors" system is a tool employed by the Turkish state to determine where houses or whole villages will be

demolished and land confiscated. It was established by law on 28 June 1975. The number of "village protectors" officially proclaimed is 12,000, but a January 2003 article announced 60,000. Some are chosen among Kurdish collaborators in the midst of village populations, while others are forced to collaborate by threat of death or expulsion. The "village protectors" fight alongside Turkish soldiers, and have more power than the police forces. This tool has been employed to divide the Kurdish population. However, the Kurdish guerilla struggle has weakened the system considerably, forcing the Turkish Republic to spend vast sums of money on its maintenance.

Ongoing development projects such as the Ilusu Dam and the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline project spell continuing losses for Kurds in Turkey, particularly through expropriation of land, failure to implement acceptable environmental standards, lack of consultation, uncompensated ancillary damage, labor violations and unacceptable use of untested materials during construction.

At the end of the 1991 Gulf War, Western powers opposed to Saddam Husain's regime transformed northern Iraq into an autonomous region where Kurds have organized a Kurdish Regional Government.

Since the last war in Iraq, the Kurds have affirmed their status as Iraqis and asked for a federal government in lieu of independence. Still, the Iraqi Kurds embody a threat for the neighboring countries—especially Turkey—that are afraid of "their" Kurds demanding full rights as a people.

The Right to Adequate Housing in International Law

The UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing defines it as “the right of every woman, man, youth and child to gain and sustain a secure home and community in which to live in peace and dignity”. General Comment No 4 of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has recognized that the right to housing should not be interpreted in a narrow, as merely having a roof over one’s head for example. Rather, it includes: security of tenure; availability of services, materials, facilities and infrastructure; affordability; habitability; accessibility; location; and cultural adequacy.

HLRN has deepened this definition and added the following entitlements: access to environmental goods; freedom from dispossession; information and capacity building; participation and self-expression; return, rehabilitation, compensation, restitution and resettlement; safe environment; security and privacy; land; and water.

Most recently, the 1998 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court recognized extensive destruction carried out unlawfully and wantonly as a war crime.

The Anfal Campaigns: February - September 1988



The map above depicts Kurdish areas of Iraq targeted for depopulation during the Ba’ath regime’s Anfal campaigns in Iraq from February through September 1988. The map below shows a view of Kurdish villages in Ovanik district (Tunceli Province), Turkey that the army burned down in whole or in part during the autumn 1994 operations in Dersim.

