

TURKMEN OF IRAQ

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Introduction:

Northern Iraq or the Musul Region is home of the Iraqi Turkmens for over a millennium. The economic and strategic importance of this land, had made it one of the most sensitive parts of the Middle East in general and of Iraq in particular.

Some definitions to keep in mind:

Turkmen: is the name of the Turks inhabiting the Musul region and the rest of Iraq.

Turkmeneli: means Turkmen-Land in Turkish. It is the name of areas where Turkmens are concentrated.

Musul Region: is the Northern part of Iraq that is naturally separated from the rest of Iraq by Himrin and Mechul mountains. It is a multi-ethnic region that includes the homelands of the Turkmens (Turkmeneli), of the Kurds (Kurdistan), of the Jazira Arabs (west of Tigris) of the Assyrians (Plains of Ninewah) as well as Ezdi and Shahbek minorities.

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History:

The Musul Region was called Turcomania by the British geographer William Gutherie in his map of 1784. The Musul region was the power base of the Atabeg Turkmen states in the 12th and 13th centuries. Its 3 major cities; Musul, Erbil and Kerkuk were the capitals of those states. Later, it became part of the larger Turkish-Turkmen states. The total statehood of the Turkmens in Iraq lasted for 9 centuries. It was called the “Musul Province” by the Ottomans in the 19th century and it was one of the three provinces (beside Baghdad and Basrah provinces) that formed Iraq.

The Musul region, despite its multi-ethnic nature, it is geographically, economically, historically and culturally a connected unit. The cities of Musul, Erbil, Kerkuk and Suleymaniye as well as the towns and villages of the mountains and steppes have always been interconnected and in close relations with each other.

Up until the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the British occupation of Iraq, Musul, Erbil and Kerkuk had always a Turkish character, However, after the British occupation of Iraq and the formation of the state of Iraq, the Jazira Arabs (Jubur and Shammar Arab tribes) began to influx into Musul from the twenties and on. The mountainous Kurds began to influx into Erbil from the fifties and on. With the fall of the monarchy in Iraq in 1958 and for political and economical (oil) reasons, the Kurds (in the sixties, seventies and recently after the American invasion) and Arabs (in the eighties-Baath era) settled in Kerkuk in mass numbers. Those politically and economically motivated settlements have significantly changed the demographic structures of those three cities. Currently, the city of Musul is dominated by the Arabs. Erbil is dominated by the Soran Kurds. The struggle for domination in Kerkuk city and its region is going on and the ethnic tension is quite high.

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Geography:

The Turkmens in the Musul Region are concentrated in four areas;

1- Telafer: Located west of Musul, it is bordered by the Tigris river from the north-east and the Syrian border from the west and the Jazira flatland from the south. It consists of the city of Telafer with 300 towns and villages around it. The population in this area is overwhelmingly Turkmen.

2- Eastern Musul: In the city of Musul, Turkmens are concentrated in the eastern part of the city called Ninewah, They are also concentrated in the towns and villages on the Tigris river located to the north and south of the city.

3- Erbil: Turkmens originally were concentrated in the downtown and the castle of Erbil. Later they were relocated from the castle for historical restoration.

4- Kerkuk: Kerkuk area is bordered with the Lower Zab river in the north, Diyala river in the south, Himrin Mountains in the west and Qaradagh mountains in the east.

This area is considered as the hub of the Turkmens. Kerkuk is considered as the capital of the Turkmens.

5- Khanaqin: This area is located between the Diyala river and the Iranian border. Main cities are Khanaqin, Qizlarbat(Sadiyye) and Qaraghan (Jalawla).

Natural Resources:

Turkmeneli is very rich in natural resources and minerals. Oil and natural gas is the most important mineral, oil fields are located in four areas:

1- The largest field is in Kerkuk, the underground reservoir stretches from nearby Erbil in the north to Tuz Khurmatu in the south.

2- Sasan and Eyn Jaleh, Batma fields, located north of Telafer to the west of the Tigris River

3- Neftkhana field located on the Iranian border south of Khanaqin.

The land is fertile and is irrigated with the rivers of Tigris, upper Zap, lower Zap, Khasa-Su, Tawuq-Su, Aqsu, Narin and Diyala.

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Population:

The Turkmen population of Iraq is approximately 3 million or %15 of the Iraqi population. The Turkmens who are ethnically Turkish, belong to the Oghuz Turkish group which is one of the three major Turkish groups.

{The other two Turkish groups are the Karluks (Ozbeks and Uyghurs) and the Kipchaks (Kazakhs, Kirghiz, Tatars, Bashkurds...etc.). The reader must not confuse the Turkmens of Iraq with the other Turkmen groups such as the Turkmens of Turkmenistan, Turkey, Syria, Caucasia, Iran or Afghanistan.}

The bulk of the Turkmens live in the Musul region, However, there are considerable numbers of Turkmens in Baghdad, the capital of Iraq, mostly concentrated in the northeastern sections of Adhamiyye, Raghiba Khatun, and Waziriyyah. There are also sizeable numbers of Turkmens in the central provinces of Diyala (Baquba, Shahraban, Mendeli), Kut (Bedre, Aziziyya), Karbala and Najaf in central Iraq.

Since the creation of Iraq after WWI and the fear of Turkey claiming the Musul Region, Britain and the successive Iraqi governments as well as the Kurdish administration in the north, until today, tend to suppress the Turkmen numbers to the lowest level possible. Therefore, there hasn't been a single reliable census. Results were always forged and a policy of discrimination and bias against the Turkmens resulted in suppressing their actual numbers to be shown by the official Iraqi statistics as %2, which means in today's numbers as 500.000 out of a total of 25 million. Whereas, the northern city of Telafer alone count for 500.000 Turkmens.

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Kurdish Settlements:

Originally, Kurds lived mostly in mid-western Iran (Hamadan, Nahawand). The word “Curdestan” was officially mentioned for the first time by the Seljuk Turks in the 11th century.

The migration of Kurdish tribes westward into Eastern Anatolia, Syria and Northern Iraq was encouraged by the Turks (Seljuks, Atabegs, Ottomans, Safawids) throughout the second millennium. The history of Kurdish-Turkish cooperation could be summarized as follows:

- 1- Cooperation with the Atabeg Turks in against the Crusaders. Salahaddin the famous Kurdish commander was sent by the Atabeg of Musul Imadeddin Zengi to liberate the Holy Land.
- 2- Cooperation with the Ilkhanid Sultan “Mahmud Ghazan” in 1295 to subdue Northern Iraq and western Iran.
- 3- Cooperation with Tamerlane in 1398-1401 in subduing northern Iraq and eastern Anatolia.
- 4- Cooperation with the Ottoman Turks (Sultan Selim-1508, Sultan Murad-1743) against the Shiite expansion in Eastern Anatolia that started by the Safawid Turks from Iran.
- 5- Cooperation with the Safawid Turkish Nadir Shah in 1734 to subdue northern Iraq to his rule.
- 6- Cooperation with the Ottomans (Sultan Mahmud-1843, Sultan Hamid-1894) to quell rebellions against the empire in northern Iraq and eastern Anatolia.

The Turks (Seljuks, Atabegs, Tamerlane, Ottomans and Safawids) in return to this cooperation by the Kurds, allowed large numbers of Kurdish tribes to move from Iran and settle in northern Iraq and eastern Anatolia. They gave them vast lands as well semi autonomous status.

The city of Suleymaniye was built by Suleyman Pasha the Ottoman governor of Baghdad at the beginning of the 18th century, to be a major Kurdish city. In the 20th century and before the start of the Kurdish revolts in the forties, Kerkuk and Erbil were considered as major Turkmen cities, but, due to economical and political reasons, large numbers of Kurdish peasants settled in Erbil and Kerkuk. Also, because of continuous revolts against the Iraqi government, significant numbers of Kurdish villages in the mountains were destroyed by the troops and those peasants were forcefully settled by the government around Erbil and Kerkuk to keep them under control. Within time, two thirds of Erbil and one quarter of Kerkuk became Kurdish. The first large scale Kurdish settlement was a suburb called “Iskan”(meaning settlement), established in 1960 by Gen. Abdul Kerim Qasim. The second Kurdish quarter was Azadi established in 1970.

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Chaldo-Assyrians:

The Chaldo-Assyrians are the original Christians of this area, mostly concentrated east of Musul, in the plains of Ninewah, which a triangle between the Tigris river and the Upper Zab river. They also exist in small numbers in Erbil and Kerkuk. Most of the Assyrians and Armenians were settled by the British after WWI in Kerkuk. The Arafa (New Kerkuk) quarter was established mostly for the Assyrians working in the oil industry.

Arab Settlements:

West of Kerkuk is Hawija, inhabited by the Arab tribes of “Obeidies” and Hadidies who were settled west of Kerkuk by the Iraqi government in the Thirties and Forties.

As a result of an intense Arabization policy during the Ba’ath era, large numbers of Arabs were forced or lured to move to Kerkuk and the rest of Kerkuk province, Arabic suburbs have been built around Turkmen cities, new Arabic settlements and irrigation projects built in the Turkmen rural areas which altered the demographics of the area beyond recognition.

Language:

Turkmen language is a dialect of Turkish which is a part of the Western Turkish language group that includes also the Turkish spoken in Turkey, Cyprus, the Balkans, Azerbaijan (North and South), Northern Syria, Iran, Turkmenistan, and Southern Turkestan (Northern Afghanistan). The Turkmen language with its 5 major accents is closer to the Turkish spoken in Azerbaijan and Urfa in southeastern Turkey rather than Turkmenistan which is part of Turkestan(central Asia).

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Main Cities:

The main Turkmen cities from north to south are: Telafer, Musul, Erbil, Altun Kopru, Kerkuk, Tuz Khurmatu, Kifri, Qaraghan, Qizlarbat, Khanaqin, Mendeli and Bedre.

Cities with population over 250,000 are as follow:

Telafer (pop. 0.5 million): This city is the northernmost Turkmen city and it is %99 Turkmen, located on the Teymurlenk (Tamerlane) hills which are part of the Sanjar-Zambar mountain range. Together with the surrounding Turkmen villages, the Turkmen population of the area is around 0.8 million. The great revolution against the British rule in Iraq in 1920 started here. Mainly an agricultural area, there are also oilfields in Sasan, Eyn Jaleh (Eyn Zale) and Batma located in the north, nearby the western banks of the Tigris River.

Musul (pop. 1.5 million): The largest city in northern Iraq. Located on the Tigris River. It was the capital of the Atabegs of Musul in the 12.th century. Atabeg Imadeddin Zengi fought the Crusaders and sent his commander Saladdin (Salahaddin) to defeat the Crusaders in Syria and Palestine. Atabegs main monument in Musul is the “Ulu Jami”(Grand Mosque) with its famous “curved minaret”. Neynewa (Nineveh), the capital of the ancient Assyrian Empire is located on the eastern bank of the Tigris river where the Turkmens and other non-Arabs are concentrated, whereas the Arabic population is concentrated in the western side of the city.

The Turkmens of Musul are mostly concentrated in Neynewa, Yunus Peygamber, where Prophet Jonas is buried, Qadikoy, Reshidiye, Qara Yatagh, Qarakoyunlu, Shirkhan, and Sellamiye. The Shahbeg (Shabak) tribes and their branches the Sarili’s and the Mawulu’s, are the remnants of the Mongol armies. Together with the surrounding villages, the Turkmen population is approximately 0.5 million. They stretch from north of Musul to the upper Zap river which borders Erbil.

Erbil (pop. 0.75 Million): Located between the upper and lower Zap rivers, Erbil is the second largest Turkmen city after Kerkuk. Erbil is the oldest surviving city in the world. It has a historical castle, which was restored few decades ago. Erbil was the capital of the first Atabeg state known as the Begtekin's, established in 1149 AD., the most famous Atabeg was Muzaffereddin Gokboru. The existing "Desert Minaret" was built during his era.

Prior to the Kurdish rebellions which started in 1949, Erbil was a major Turkmen city.

In the Forties, Erbil was made of 5 quarters:

- Qal’a (castle) which included: Saray, Topkhana and Tekiyya sections.
- Tajil Islam
- Tajil Yahud
- Arab Mahallesi
- Khanaqah (Kurdish)

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By 1947 the quarter of Tayrawa was established and by 1957 the district of Seydawa was established. After 1958, the number of Kurdish quarters increased.

The reason for this increase in Kurdish population was economical. Rural Kurdish peasants moved to Erbil for better job opportunities. Also because of the continuous destruction of the rebel Kurdish villages in the mountains east of Erbil, by the Iraqi army, large numbers of Kurds were settled in Erbil. Today, Turkmens, mostly concentrated in the ancient castle, constitute approximately one third of the population.

Kerkuk (pop. 1.25 Million): Located on the river Khasa Su. It is the cultural center of the Iraqi Turkmens and the largest Turkmen city in Iraq. It is also called the Bride of the North because of the many parks and green areas. The rich oilfields around Kerkuk, made it the most important city in Iraq. Being the center of the oil industry, it produces one third of the Iraqi oil. The eternal fire of Baba Gurgur is located in the middle of those fields, it has been active for thousands of years.

It was the capital of the Iwak Atabegs in the 11.th century. South of Kerkuk is the city of Tawuk or Daquq on the river of Tawuq Su, which was the first Turkish city built in this area around 850 AD by the descendants of the Turkish troops placed in the Abbasid capital Samarra.

The distinctive castle of Kerkuk was built 3000 years ago. Prophet Daniel is buried here. Populated entirely by the Turkmens, among them the Christian Turkmens, whose numbers dwindled down to few hundred in recent years, Kerkuk castle had all the aspects of ancient Turkish architecture. There are a lot of historical Turkish buildings and monuments in the city. In 1997 Saddam ordered the demolition of this ancient castle which was a unique historical monument and a symbol of Kerkuk.

The majority of Assyrians and Armenians were settled in the thirties by the British to work in the oil industry. The majority of Arabs were brought by the Iraqi government in the thirties, forties, seventies and eighties, for political reasons, to upset the ethnic balance in their benefit. The majority of the Kurds came to Kerkuk for economical and political reasons. Some were forcefully settled by the government, in the forties and the Qasim era, to keep them under control, others were settled by the Kurdish parties to change the ethnic balance in their benefit during the proposed ethnic plebiscite in 1970 which was suspended by the government.

Prior to the massive arabization of Kerkuk, in the Eighties, the city was made of 21 Turkmen and 5 Kurdish quarters. The original Kerkuk quarters are:

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Turkmen Quarters:

A- West of the river Khasa Su:	B- East of the river Khasa Su:
1- Qorya.	1- Qal'a (the Castle, demolished in 1997)
2- Ahmad Agha.	2- Musalla (1/5 Arabs)
3- Shaturlu (1/5 Assyrian, Armenian).	3- Chay
4- Sari Kahya (1/5 Assyrian).	4- Piryadi
5- Mahatta.	5- Awchi
6- Almas (1/3 Kurdish and 1/3 Assyrian).	6- Bulagh (1/5 kurt
7- Begler.	7- Chuqur
8- Arafa (1/2 Assyrian-new Kerkuk).	8- Akhir Huseyn (1/5 Kurdish)
9- Baghdad Yolu.	9- Kasapkhana
10- Tisin (demolished)	
11- Yengi Tisin	
12- Hamzalilar	
13- Gawur Bagi (Mixed: All nationalities)	

Kurdish Quarters:

A- West of the river Khasa Su:	B- East of the river Khasa Su:
1- Rahimowa (1/4 Turkmen, Assyrian, Armenian)	1- Imam Qasim (1/3 Turkmen)
	2- Shorja (1/3 Turkmen)
	3- Iskan (established in 1960) (1/4 Turkmen)
	4- Azadi (established in 1970)

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Chronological History:

Turks existed in Iraq for quite a long time. The Sumerians who came to Iraq (3500-4000) years ago from Central Asia, established the first civilization of the world. The linguists found at least 300 words to be of Turkish origin. Excavations in Turkmenistan revealed cities of Sumerian origin similar to the ones in Nuzi (Kerkuk) Ur and Eridu.

Turks assumed important positions in the Sasanid Empire, the prime minister and chief financial officer of the emperor Yezdigerd was Begir Khan Buda. There were too many Turkish tribes and principalities in Central and Southern Euphrates, the most important ones were the Batuqlu and Banuqlu principalities, headed by Bozboru who fiersly resisted the muslim Arab armies, His son prince Solubay, later became a muslim and cooperated with the Arab armies. The military tradition of the Turks attracted the attention of the Umayyads and they started to bring more Turks to Iraq as elite forces.

Ubeidullah bin Ziad the Umayyad governor of Basra brought 2000 soldiers in 674 AD. Another group was brought in 692 AD by Hajjaj bin Yusuf Al-Thaqafi, the governor of Iraq, to protect his capital Waset (Al-Kut). Later they were settled in Badrah on the Iranian border in central Iraq. Badrah is the oldest existing Turkmen settlement with more than 1300 years in history. The Abbasid Caliphs Abu Ja'far Al-Mansur, Haroun Al-Rashid and Alma'moun brought At least 2000 Turkish soldiers every year to serve as the elite protection forces and settled them in Baghdad.

In 835 AD. The largest group of selected Turkish soldiers numbering 40.000 were brought by Caliph Al-Mu'tasim along with their Turkish brides (40.000) and a new city of Samara was constructed for them, Samarra (pronounced Samarra in Arabic), became the capital of the Abbasid Empire during the Mu'tasim era. After his death, the capital was moved back to Baghdad and most of the Turkish inhabitants of Samarra moved across the Hamrin Mountains to establish the first Turkish settlement in northern Iraq; Tawuk or Dakuk which is located south of Kerkuk.

The Attraction of the Land:

It was the hilly landscape of these lands which was identical to their homeland in Turkestan and Central Asia that attracted the Turkish tribes to this area. With a plenty of water and a fertile land that included the strategic castles of Kerkuk, Erbil, Musul and Telafer, served as military control posts for the northern and central Iraq and to protect transportation routes from Iran to Anatolia, as well as being close to the center of the Empire in Baghdad, all those factors played a significant role in the settlement of this land by the incoming Turkish tribes over the centuries.

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Turkmen Name:

There are many theories about the name Turkmen, but the most logical one is the way a Turk, in those days, would have introduced himself or herself when asked about his or her national identity, by saying in the Central Asian Turkish accent: " Men Turk' men " which means "I am a Turk". Even today, an Ozbek or an Uygur from Turkestan, introduces himself as Ozbek'men or Uygur'men. Whereas in today's western Turkish accent, self introduction is: "Men Turkem or Ben Turkum " .

The Start of the Turkish Rule:

The military superiority, reliability, loyalty and the durability of the Turkish forces increased the dependence of the Abbasid Empire on the Turks. At the time of Caliph Mu'tasim the army was under the command of a Turkish commander called Afshin. In 1055 the Seljukian commander Tughrul Beg was asked by Caliph Al-Qaim-bi-Amrullah to save Baghdad from the Persian Buweihy domination. Tughrul Beg was awarded the rank "Sultan" and since then, Turks became the official rulers of Iraq until 1918.

Although the Bayat tribe is one of the major tribes that make up the Turkmen population, the Turkmens all over Iraq are a mix of too many Turkish tribes that came to this area to support the 8 different Turkish states and empires that ruled this land for nine centuries. These Turkish states and empires are:

STATE DATES DURATION:

- 1- The Seljuk Empire 1055- 1149 94 Years
- 2- The Atabegs 1149- 1258 109 Years
- 3- The Ilkhanids 1258- 1336 78 Years
- 4- The Jalairids 1336- 1360 24 Years
- 5- The Karakoyunlu 1360- 1469 109 Years (Baran)
- 6- The Akkoyunlu 1469- 1508 39 Years (Bayindir)
- 7- The Safawids 1508- 1534: 26 Years, 1623 – 1638: 15 Years....Total: 41 Years
- 8- The Ottoman Empire 1534- 1623 89 Years
1638- 1918 280 Years.... Total: 369 Years

Total: 863 Years

The chronology above, explains the 5 major accents the Turkmens speak today.

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Religion:

The Turkmens adhere to the Islamic religion with its both branches the Sunni-Hanefi (two third) and the Shia (one third). There are also a small group of Christians used to be located in the Castle of Kerkuk before its demolition by Saddam in 1997.

The Role of the Turkmens in the Iraqi History:

Being the local backbone of the above mentioned empires and states in Iraq, the Turkmens formed the bulk of the army and the administrative elite throughout the Middle East. Especially in Iraq, there are numerous monuments universities, mosques, cities, bridges and other achievements from that long era. Throughout their history the Turkmens defended Iraq and Syria from foreign invaders:

- 1- They drove out the Crusaders in the 11.th century after fighting for 70 years under the command of Imadeddin Zengi the Atabeg of Musul and Salahaddin Eyyubi who was brought up by the Zengi family.
- 2- They defended Baghdad against the Mongol invaders in 1258 especially the heroic efforts of commander “Aytoghdu” and his Turkish battalion. Eventually, all Mongols were assimilated and blended with other Turkish tribes.
- 3- They defended Iraq against the Iranians and prevented them from occupying Iraq through many wars that started in 1508 and ended in 1638.
- 4- They defended Iraq against the Wahhabi Bedouins who attacked the Shiite holy sites in Karbala, Kufa and Najaf in the 18.th century and drove them out of the country.

The most important issue is that during this long period, the Turkmens, being part of or related to the rulers, never harmed the local peoples, there were no massacres, no ethnic cleansing, and no force to change other people’s languages or religions. On the contrary they blended with the locals, and in some cases even assimilated. Today we know that almost half of the Bayat tribe has been arabized.

The Politics of Oil:

With the beginning of the 20.th century, oil was becoming the prime source of energy. The British, with the help of their intelligence network and “archeological” explorations, knew that Kerkuk area in the Musul province had large deposits of oil. As a fact, the eternal fire of Baba Gurgur was burning for thousands of years, oil and tar was being used by the local people since the beginning of history. In order to stay as global super power it was necessary for Britain to possess those oilfields. Therefore, the British laid plans to end the Ottoman Empire years before the First World War. As a first step Kuwait was occupied in 1899, to serve as a foothold to invade Iraq when the time was right.

In the meantime the British oil companies were attempting to buy those oil rich lands privately. Sultan Abdulhamid II., through his powerful intelligence agency, “The Special

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Organization” or “Teshkilat-i Makhsusa”, knew about the British intentions in the oil fields of Musul. So, he purchased those lands as crown properties to protect them from being sold to foreign companies, then he ordered the establishment of the Turkish Petroleum Company, a Turkish-German joint venture and gave it exclusive rights to explore oil in those lands. He also connected Musul to Anatolia through the Toros Railway.

The First World War and the British Tactics:

The Ottoman Empire recognizing the power of the British Empire, tried to ally itself with Britain, and as a sign of good will, they ordered for the building of two of the most advanced and expensive war ships, at that time, by the British “Vickers” company and paid for them in advance. But the British, as previously planned, did every thing possible to intimidate the Turks and push them into the opposite German camp. Therefore, it allied itself with Russia, the eternal enemy of the Turks. And to further provoke them, Britain confiscated both war ships, “Sultan Osman” and “Reshadiye” which were ready to go to Turkey.

The Germans immediately compensated the Turks with two legendary German warships “Breslau” and “Goeben” which sailed to Istanbul then continued to the Black sea under a Turkish flag to bombard the Russian port city of Odessa, pulling the Ottoman Empire into the First World War unwillingly and unprepared. Britain declared war on Turkey on Nov.5, 1914 and from their bases in Kuwait, they launched an attack and landed in Basra on Nov 7. The Ottoman army, compared to the British army, was ill equipped, but despite that, They managed to defeat the British army at the battle of Kut-al-Amara on April 26.th 1915, and took General Townsend, prisoner of war.

In order to break the Turkish resistance, the British intelligence service based in Cairo, decided to use Sharif Hussein, the Arab governor of Makka and promised him with help to be the King of all Ottoman Arabia, stretching from Syria and Iraq in the north to Yemen and Oman in the South. Lured by the dream of becoming a Caliph and a king of Arabia, he declared war on the Ottoman Empire on June 5, 1915 starting the Arabian revolution. The British troops landed at the port of Jeddah to help Hussein, and to give the impression of occupying the holy lands of Islam. This critical action forced the Ottomans to divert large numbers of troops to Hejaz, weakening the Iraqi and Syrian fronts. The British sent fresh troops to Iraq and Egypt pushing the Turks to the north. They occupied Baghdad on 11 March 1917 and managed to sweep through, all the way up to Kerkuk which fell on March 24, 1918. The Ottoman army fought back and recaptured Kerkuk on May 24th 1918, pushing the British to the Himrin Mountains which was the border of the Musul province. But the British changed tactics and prepared to attack Musul from the west bank of the Tigris River, therefore, the Ottoman army withdrew from Kerkuk on October 26.th 1918, to strengthen their forces in Qayyara, at the border of the Musul province. Armistice and cease-fire was declared on October 30th, 1918. The First World War had officially ended with rival troops stationed at the southern border of the Musul province.

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The war ended and the British still couldn't achieve the main reason of their mission which was the possession of the oil rich areas of the Musul province, so, ignoring and violating the cease-fire agreement and using article-7 of the armistice regulations as a pretext to occupy any area where there is a local disturbance, they moved towards Musul. In fact, there weren't any disturbances in Musul except for a provocation by few Armenians who called the British for help, which was a prepared scenario by the British agents to give the occupiers a reason to use this clause. The British General William Marshall, gave an ultimatum to General Ali Ihsan Pasha on November 7.th 1918 to evacuate Musul. To avoid further bloodshed and believing that Musul legally belongs to Turkey, the Turkish army started to withdraw on Nov. 8.th and by Nov.11.th the British troops entered Musul, ending 863 years of Turkish rule in Iraq.

The British Era

Local Resistance:

The people of Iraq, never accepted the British occupation, they preferred to rejoin Turkey as the successor of the Ottomans for religious reasons. Sheik Mahmud Hafid the head of the Soran Kurdish tribes in Suleymaniye and the sheiks of the Behdinan Kurds in Imadiye rose up against the British authorities. Suleymaniye was liberated on May 22.nd 1920, but the British response was very harsh. Emadia and Suleymaniye were bombed heavily from the air. By June 17.th 1920 Suleymaniye had fallen and sheik Mahmud was captured and sent to exile in India.

In June 1920, the Turkmen of Telafer revolted against the British, this revolution (Qach-qach revolution) spread like a wild fire to the rest of Iraq. By the end of 1920, the British suppressed the uprising and killed over 10.000 people, also, it cost them too many soldiers and officers and drained the British budget to the limit. Britain decided to move behind the scene and create a puppet Iraqi regime controlled by them, so they brought Faisal, who was thrown out of Syria by the French, and declared him as the king of Iraq.

Turkey persists on regaining Musul:

The newly formed Turkish National Assembly declared Musul within the "National Pact" which defined the minimum limits of the "New Turkey", and persisted on re-taking it back even if it cost another war. The Mesopotamian Army was mobilized to Mardin.

The Ozdemir Mission:

The Turkmen chiefs Nazim and Kerim Fettah Begs as well as the heads of the Kurdish tribes asked Mustafa Kemal Pasha to help them organize the resistance against the British occupation. In February 1922 Major Shefik Ozdemir was assigned by Mustafa Kemal Pasha to go to Northern Iraq to help the locals organize the resistance.

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A military contingent headed by Major Shefik Ozdemir arrived in Rawanduz on June 22nd 1922. Supported by the local Turkmen chiefs Karim Fattah Beg and Nazim Beg as well as the local Kurdish tribes, they started a guerrilla war and achieved a major victory in the battle of Derbent on August 31, 1922 (This coincides with the major victory of the Turkish army at the battle of Inonu against the Greek army in Sakarya, northwest Turkey) on September 7th, Marshall Fevzi Chakmak, the chief of staff of the Turkish Army, cabled the commanders of the Mesopotamian Army, to get ready to take Musul back by force. On September 18th 1922, the Ozdemir mission entered Shaklawa, east of Erbil. Towards the end of October they were able to infiltrate deep inside Iraq while the Turkish Mesopotamian army was waiting across the border, in Mardin and Cizre, ready to attack.

Turkey switches to diplomacy - The Lausanne Conference:

The victorious Turkish army was marching to regain Istanbul and the straights which were under the allied occupation. The Italians and the French were in no mood to fight the Turks, the British were left alone in the field facing the Turkish army. Under these conditions they signed up the armistice of Mudania on October 11, 1922 in which they gave back Istanbul, the straights and Eastern Thrace.

Peace conference convened in Lausanne, Switzerland on Nov. 20, 1922. Turkish claims on Musul and British counter claims were at odds. The British authorities declared on December 8th 1922, that they will never give up Musul even if that meant another war. The Turkish general staff ordered the army to be on alert. Fierce arguments and disagreements between the Turks and the British regarding the Musul issue, resulted in excluding it from the agenda of the conference, and it was left to be dealt with in between the two governments.

Loosing The Kurdish Support:

Up till now, the Kurdish tribes in northern Iraq were supporting Turkey for religious reasons. But later, some changes in the nature of the Turkish state had resulted in negative effects on the Kurdish tribes. In November, 1, 1922, the Turkish parliament terminated the Ottoman Sultanate and stripped the Sultan of his title and expelled him from Turkey. along with the rest of the members of the Ottoman dynasty, stripping them from the Turkish citizenship.

The termination of the Ottoman empire was used extensively by British agents to put a rift between the Kurdish tribes and Turkey. Traditionally the Kurds were loyal to the Ottoman Empire, whereas The British were agitating the Kurds against Turkey. Naturally, this situation affected the Ozdemir mission, and the Kurdish support was lost to the other side.

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The Termination of the Ozdemir Mission:

On April 8.th 1923, the British, with the support of some Kurdish tribes headed by Seyyid Taha, attacked the Ozdemir forces, stationed in Rawanduz, from two directions, they cut his supply route from Hakkari, and without any support from the awaiting Turkish army in Cizre-Mardin, he had no choice but to abandon his positions and entered Iran on April 23, 1923, reaching Van, Turkey, on May 10, 1923, thus ending a mission that had a great chance of success.

The Assyrian Rebellion:

While the diplomatic efforts were going on, Britain was using the principle of “the best defense is offence” to further discourage the Turks from any effective action to regain Musul. New British intelligence agitations led the Assyrians, who were allied with Britain, to commit a massacre in Kerkuk on May 4.th 1924 against the Turkmen who were naturally allied with Turkey, hundreds of civilians were killed. Also in Turkey, the Assyrians rebelled in Hakkari on August 7.th 1924 in order to keep the Mesopotamian Army busy. This incident in Hakkari was used by Lord Curzon during the peace conference to lay claim on Hakkari as part of the Musul province and as a sign that the local people rejected the Turkish rule.

The Kurdish Rebellion:

The British agitation among the Kurds in south eastern Turkey to react to the removal of the Caliphate and the Islamic law was successful. Sheik Said started his rebellion against the Turkish state on February 2.nd, 1925. This campaign diverted the attention of the Turkish government away from Musul, and the Mesopotamian army was used to suppress this unexpected rebellion. Britain, of course, used this issue also against the Turks to convince the League of Nations that Turkey has no right to claim Musul where half of the population is Kurdish, while the Kurds inside Turkey were unhappy for being under Turkish control.

The end of the Musul Problem:

Turkey was exhausted with wars since 1912. Persistence on regaining Musul meant a new war with Britain which was the greatest super power at that time. Turkish economy was in ruins, therefore, Turkey wasn't able to continue this campaign anymore.

Turkey reluctantly, signed the Ankara agreement on June 5.th 1926, Leaving Musul to Iraq, recognizing Iraq as a state and defining its borders. Unlike similar agreements with Greece for Western Thracian Turks, with France for Iskenderun and with Russia for Nahchevan, the British did not allow Turkey to be a guarantor for the Turkmen in Iraq. They promised that all minority rights will be respected by the Iraqi state as it was

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mentioned in their constitution of 1925 which declared that Iraq's official languages are: Arabic, Turkish and Kurdish. Every citizen of Iraq is entitled to use his/her language in education and courts and administration where they constitute a majority.

To further appease Turkey, the British offered half a Million Sterling Pounds annually for 25 years for the lost (upcoming) oil revenues. Since that date, Turkey officially never mentioned Musul. The Turkmens were left on their own. It was agreed that within one year from the date of signing the border agreement, people of the region were free to move to Turkey. The Turkmens, preferred to stay in their lands.

The Iraqi State And the Turkmens:

The Monarchy Era:

In 1921 referendum, the Turkmens voted against Faisal as the king of Iraq. This action alienated the monarchy against the Turkmens. The British authorities and the successive Iraqi governments always kept the Turkmens away from administration and treated them as remnants of the Turkish Empire, never wanted to use their expertise in the civil administration nor in the military, never gave them any high governmental posts except for very few instances.

Iraq applied to the League of Nations in 1932, and declared its determination to respect all minority rights. After being admitted, their policy changed in 1933 and Arabism became dominant. Turkish schools were down sized, Turkmens who were suspected of Turkism were exiled. Arab tribes such Obeidies and Hadidies were settled west of Kerkuk in the thirties and Forties. Barzani's Kurdish uprising started in 1949, the Iraqi army suppressed the rebellion and destroyed hundreds of Kurdish villages, moving the villagers to the major northern cities of Kerkuk, Erbil and Musul, to keep them under government control.

The Republican Era:

After the removal of monarchy in 1958, Kurds were favored and included in the constitution. Mulla Mustafa Barzani was invited from his exile in Russia back to Iraq. He demanded the establishment of Kurdistan including Kerkuk and all Turkmen lands. This demand alienated the Turkmens, ending good neighborly relations with the Kurds that lasted for over a millennium. Kurdish and Communist elements committed the Kerkuk massacre on July 14th 1959, intending to ethnically cleanse the Turkmens from Kerkuk. Hundreds of Turkmens were tortured, viciously killed and mutilated. Turkey issued a warning to Iraq and mobilized the army from Diyarbakir to the Iraqi border. In the meantime, the Soviet army was mobilized in Georgia and Armenia against any Turkish moves into Iraq. On the third day of the Kerkuk massacre, fearing the start of a regional

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war. General Abdulkarim Qasim sent an army from Baghdad to Kerkuk and stopped the massacre.

General Qasim tried to appease the Turkmens by arresting the criminals who committed the massacre, allowed Turkmen broadcasting from radio Baghdad, and allowed the establishment of the Turkmen Brotherhood Club in Baghdad. For the first time in the Iraqi history he declared that the “Million Turkmens”(out of seven million Iraqis) were part of the Iraqi nation.

In the meantime, Qasim declared war on Barzani for demanding separation of Kurdistan from Iraq. Hundreds of Kurdish villages were destroyed, the villagers were transferred to the major northern cities of Kerkuk, Erbil and Musul. The district of Iskan in eastern Kerkuk was built by general Qasim for the new Kurdish settlers.

The Baath Era:

The Baath party took over in 1968 and inherited the Kurdish problem, in order to curb Kurdish demands on Kerkuk, they gave cultural rights to the Turkmens on January 24, 1970. Which included education in the Turkish language, issuing Turkish periodicals, forming cultural associations and the establishment of Kerkuk television. They also allowed the opening of a Turkish Cultural Mission in Kerkuk.

The Kurdish Autonomous region including the three northern provinces of Duhok, Erbil and Sulaimanieh was granted on March 11, 1970, to the Kurds by the Baath government. But the Kurds insisted on the inclusion of Kerkuk province, parts of Musul and Diyala provinces into their Autonomous region. They demanded a plebiscite all across the traditional Turkmen lands from Musul to Mendeli. Tens of thousands of Kurds were settled by the KDP in Kerkuk and other Turkmen cities such as Altun Kopru, Tuz Khurmatu. The District of Azadi in eastern Kerkuk was established at that time.

Turkmens demanded political rights to establish a Turkmen political party, this was flatly rejected by the Baath Party. Disagreements between the Turkmens and the Baath Party began to surface on the issue of the Turkmen alphabet. The Baath party insisted on the use of the Arabic alphabet, whereas the Turkmens demanded the Latin alphabet which was used in Turkey. Within 2 years, Turkish schools were suspended by the Baath Party.

On October 11, 1972 and for the first time in Iraq’s history, the Turkmens started a general strike in all Turkmen areas. This action pushed the Baath Party to respond harshly. Suspecting an organized resistance, arrests, torture and killings became the regular practice of the Baath Party against the Turkmens. Kerkuk province name was changed to Al-Tameem (Nationalization) in 1976. The area of Kerkuk province was down sized. The eastern part of Chemchemal and Qadir Kerem were given to Suleymaniye province, the central part of Tuz Khurmatu was given to Salahaddin (Tikrit) Province and the southern part of Kifri and Qara Teppe were given to Diyalah province. The Turkish Cultural Mission in Kerkuk was closed down.

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The arrest and execution of the top four leaders in Baghdad on January 16, 1980, was the beginning of a total crack down on the Turkmens. The arabization of Kerkuk started on a wide scale in the Eighties. Turkmen language was banned in public and even in telephone conversations, selling properties to any Turkmen was forbidden. Hundreds of thousands of Arabs were brought from central and southern Iraq and settled in newly constructed districts around Kerkuk. In the meantime thousands of Turkmens were transferred to the southern provinces of Iraq.

Turkmens were not allowed to declare their nationality during the general census they were forced to declare themselves either Arabs or Kurds. During the Iranian and Gulf War, the Turkmens were sent to the front lines to be eliminated. The mainly Shiite Turkmen district of Tisin in Kerkuk and the towns of Beshir, Leylan and Turkalan, south of Kerkuk, were razed to the ground under the pretext of treason and aiding the Iranians. During the Kurdish uprising of 1991, the Iraqi army massacred hundreds of Turkmens in Altun Kopru.

The Safe Haven Period:

After the establishment of the “Safe Haven Area” by the allies in northern Iraq, only 10% of the Turkmens in Erbil and Kifri were fortunate to be included in this zone.

The Turkmens enjoyed the freedom and formed their first political party, the Iraqi National Turkmen Party (INTP), which participated along with other Iraqi opposition parties to establish a democratic model for Iraq. The Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) although not admitting to complete Turkmen rights especially in Kerkuk, was generally in good relations with the Turkmens. Other Iraqi opposition parties while giving in to the Kurdish demands, they remained conservative towards Turkmen rights. On April 24, 1995, The Iraqi Turkmen Front (ITF) was established in Erbil from six organizations:

- 1- Iraqi Turkmen National Party (INTP)
- 2- Turkmeneli Party (TP)
- 3- Independents Movement
- 4- Turkmeneli Cooperation and Cultural Foundation
- 5- Iraqi Turks Cultural and Solidarity Association
- 6- Turkmen Brotherhood Center

The emblem of the ITF is a white crescent on a sky blue background with six stars symbolizing the six states established by the Turkmens in Iraq. Turkmen political, social and cultural institutions were established to serve the 250.000 Turkmens of Erbil as well as the Turkmens of Kifri.

The rivalry between KDP and PUK escalated to full scale war, which led to the invitation of the Iraqi army by Massoud Barzani to defeat PUK and establish KDP control in Erbil. The Iraqi army remained three days in Erbil, destroying the Turkmen Front buildings, executing 17 top Turkmen leaders and taking 39 others to Baghdad.

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Relations with the KDP in Erbil began to deteriorate after the refusal of ITF to submit to KDP demands which were:

- Recognizing the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) as the legitimate government of Kurdistan which regards Turkmens as a minority. The ITF objection was based on the absence of a fair elections and the existence of two rival regional governments, one in Erbil and the other one in Suleymaniye.
- Obligation of having a permission to form a political party from KDP. The ITF objection was based on the reality that ITF is a political entity same as KDP. No party needs permission from another one to operate.
- Disbanding of the Turkmen militia. ITF refused this demand, because it didn't trust the KDP in providing protection for ITF personnel and installations as happened in 1996, 1998 and 2000. This militia was necessary to protect ITF personnel and installations. Also, other political parties continued carrying their weapons, such as the Islamic Kurdish parties.
- Kurdish parties claimed that ITF was connected to Turkey:

Turkey is the only country in the world that supports the Turkmen cause, it is natural that Turkey supports, ITF. In fact, Turkey supported both KDP and PUK since 1991, and allowed them to enjoy their autonomy. Now they have established 5 puppet Turkmen parties to counter ITF influence and they are showing them as the legitimate Turkmen political organizations.

The main issue is the way KDP looks at the Turkmens as a small minority. They declared the Turkmen population of Erbil as 10.000 instead of 250.000. They exiled Turkmen teachers to Kurdish areas, and brought Kurdish teachers to Turkmen schools, reduced Turkish classes to one a day and imposed Kurdish on Turkmen students. Daily Harassments on ITF personnel in the streets continued.

Turkmeneli Under Kurdish Occupation:

The Turkish parliament refused on March 01, 2003, to allow the US troops to use Turkish soil for the invasion of Iraq. However, the Turkish government allowed US to use the Turkish air space and land for logistical supplies. This issue angered the US administration. The invasion of Iraq started on March 19th 2003, on April 10th, 2003, U.S. Ignored Turkish Red Lines against Kurds entering Kerkuk and Musul and allowed PUK to occupy Kerkuk and the rest of the Turkmen cities, also allowed KDP to occupy Musul. After this date, the U.S. was completely bias towards the Kurds and indifferent and sometimes hostile towards the Turkmens. They disallowed the Turkmen militia and did not allow the Turkmens to govern themselves. But, allowed Kurdish hegemony in Kerkuk and other Turkmen towns.

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PUK established their de-facto Kurdish administration in Turkmen towns, disregarding the Turkmen majority, Kurds began evicting the Arabs brought by Saddam, ethnic tensions reached a height that was never seen before.

All government offices were occupied by the Kurds, Turkmen or Arabs are forced to communicate in Kurdish in order to achieve any official work. Land Registry offices were robbed of its contents to be modified in favor of the Kurds. Fake identification cards showing Kerkuk as their birth place were issued to hundreds of thousands of Kurds.

All exits to Turkmen towns and cities were controlled by Peshmergas. Kerkuk was and is still surrounded by 35.000 Peshmergas ready to enter when the ethnic cleansing starts.

On August 30 and 31st, 2003, Turkmen in Kerkuk and Tuz Khurmatu protested these chauvinistic actions through peaceful demonstrations, Peshmergas fired on them, Turkmen suffered large number of casualties. Every peaceful Turkmen protest ended in bloodshed. The purest Turkmen city of Telafer (pop. 500.000) was reduced to rubble after 3 major attacks by the American forces which were misled by the Peshmergas, to be the center of the “foreign Terrorists”. Major Turkmen leaders and active individuals were and are assassinated by daily car bombs in Kerkuk and surrounding areas. Since the American occupation of Iraq in 2003, the two major demands of the Turkmen for:

a) A fair and internationally observed census and b) Disbanding the Peshmerga militias, were ignored. On the contrary, the Peshmergas were included in the new Iraqi army which was headed by a Kurd as the Chief of Staff.

Under their mercy, there were two elections in Iraq, in which results in Northern Iraq were manipulated and modified to a level that surpassed even the Soviet styles. Election Violations were committed under the watchful eyes of the Americans the aim was to reduce Turkmen votes to a symbolic level.

Under the wide scale vote forgery, ITF managed to get only one deputy., Shiite Turkmen had no choice but to get their deputies from the Shiite list. Currently, the Turkmen have only 8 deputies among 275 which makes 3% of the population.

The Situation Today:

The Turkmen managed to preserve their existence and culture against Arab chauvinism for 85 years. But after 2003, they are facing Kurdish chauvinism and barbarism supported by the United States of America which did not fulfill its own promises of bringing justice, fairness and political honesty to Iraq. It is impossible to see the application of American values in Iraq.

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Today, as a reward for their services, Massoud Barzani has been promoted to be the president of the Kurdish region and Jalal Talabani has been promoted to be the president of Iraq. Their final aim is to include Kerkuk in the Kurdish area and then declare it as the Capital of Kurdistan. With Kerkuk's rich oil revenues they are planning for secession and declare independence from Iraq under U.S. Protection. Currently, they are preparing to include Kerkuk in the Kurdish region through a tailored referendum at the end of 2007.

To achieve this goal they brought 350.000 Kurds from the mountains of Northern Iraq as well as from Syria, Iran and Turkey. They settled some of them in the houses of the fleeing Arabs who were brought earlier during the Saddam era. The rest are waiting in their makeshift houses and slums established on the lands of the Turkmens, as well as government and public lands.

If this happens, the widest ethnic cleansing in Iraq's history will occur. Turkmens and Arabs will be either killed or flee or accept assimilation. The Turkmens of Iraq will cease to exist as a nation. This action will push Turkey, Iran and Syria to interfere militarily, U.S. Will counter attack them and the Middle Eastern War will start.

The Real condition Of The Kurdish People:

Although the victims of this occupation primarily are the Turkmens, Sunni Arabs and the Christians, but in fact, even the general Kurdish population is unhappy too. The despotic and undemocratic regimes of the feudal warlords Barzani and Talabani didn't give the Kurdish people their democratic rights and fairness. Barzani and Talabani are presidents for life and so are their dynasties after them. No Kurd has the right to challenge them in tailored elections. Their foreign bank accounts are in Billions. No Kurd has a chance of getting a job without being a member in either KDP or PUK. Any public protest by the Kurdish public is faced with suppression and disappearance.

Turkmen Demands And Conclusion:

Despite this bleak reality there is a hope to recover.

Main Turkmen Demands:

- 1- **Cancel Referendum:** With the existing demographic changes in Kerkuk, the Turkmens and Arabs will definitely loose. This will start ethnic clashes and regional war. Therefore, the proposed 2007 referendum on Kerkuk must be nullified.

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- 2- **Disarm Peshmergas:** Kurdish militias must be completely disarmed and authoritarian powers of both Kurdish parties (KDP, PUK) must be removed so that all individuals (Kurds, Turkmens, Arabs, Assyrians) can express their feelings and have the freedom of choice.
- 3- **Reverse Demographic Changes:** Thousands of Kurdish militias, officials and peasants brought from Erbil, Duhok and Suleymaniye as well as Turkey, Syria and Iran must be withdrawn from all Turkmen lands from Altun Kopru to Mendeli including Kerkuk and Tuz Khurmatu.
- 4- **Turkmen Self-Determination:** The Turkmens are the inhabitants of their lands for over a millennium. The Turkmens are a distinct society. They must have the right to self-determination. Their lands cannot be incorporated in either neighboring Arab or Kurdish regions.
- 5- **Fair Census:** Population Facts must be established by a fair and correct census under strict international observation.
- 6- **Kerkuk is Turkmen:** Kerkuk is a Turkmen city by origin, Kurds influxed to the city in the early seventies and after April 10, 2003. Large numbers of Arabs were placed by the Baath regime in the eighties and nineties. Therefore, the governor of Kerkuk and major administration posts should be given to the Turkmens. The 25% Kurdish residents of Kerkuk are not denied their rights. They should be given their rights proportionate to their real numbers.
- 7- **2 New Turkmen Provinces:** Telafer and Tuz Khurmatu (including Mendeli) to be separate provinces, and the three provinces (Kerkuk, Telafer and Tuz Khurmatu) to form the Federal State of Turkmeneli. In mixed areas such as Musul and Baquba to be jointly administered by Arabs and Turkmens. Erbil and Khanaqin should be jointly administered by Kurds and Turkmens.
- 8- **Multicultural Iraq:** Iraq should be declared a multi-cultural state with three official languages; Arabic, Kurdish and Turkish (i.e. Switzerland).
- 9- **Turkmens a Fundamental Nationality:** Turkmens should be recognized by the new Iraqi constitution as one of the 3 main nationalities of Iraq.
- 10- **Turkish to be Official:** Turkish language to be one of the official languages of Iraq and used officially in Turkmeneli Federal State.

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- 11- **Turkmen Fair Share:** Turkmens should have their contingent in administrating Iraq according to their population ratio which will be declared by the general census.

Thank You For Reading This Document!

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