



# Time For Reckoning

The proceedings of the 17<sup>th</sup> anniversary conference on Anfal and Halabja  
London March 2005

## Nemam - London

In 1988, Saddam's army carried out one of the most horrendous attacks in history, called Anfal. During Anfal 182,000 Kurds were massacred; over 4000 villages were razed to the ground; the environment and rural Kurdish existence were eradicated; chemical weapons were used, the whole world witnessed the chemical attacks on Halabja.

Every year, the Kurdish Organisations in the United Kingdom unite and jointly present a large event as a tribute to the victims of Anfal and Halabja. This event commemorates the two major atrocities (Anfal and Halabja) that were committed against the Kurdish nation.

On the 13<sup>th</sup> of March 2005, the Kurdish community marked the 17<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Anfal and Halabja at the School of Oriental and African Studies. The event was Organised by "The Joint Committee for the Remembrance of Anfal and Halabja" consisting of 16 Kurdish Organisation and the list is as follows:

*Kurdish Cultural Centre (KCC)*  
*Kurdish Housing Association (KHA)*  
*Kurdistan Scientific and Medical Federation-UK*  
*(KSMF-UK incorporating KSA and KMA)*



A victim of Anfal pauses a question about her father's fate.



Children and relatives of the missing 182,000 victims of the Anfal campaigns demonstrating in Southern Kurdistan - demanding the perpetrators to be brought to justice

Kurdish Human Right's Project (KHRP)

Kurdish Women's Organisation (KWO)

Kurdish Exile Association (KEA)  
Kurdish Disability Organisation (KDO)

Fed-Bir (Kurdish Federation in the UK)

Kurdistan Referendum Committee (KRM)

Centre of Halabja against Anfalization and Genocide of the Kurds (CHAK)

Hellebje Research Network Project Online

Kirkuk Support Committee (KSC)

Kurdish Association for New Generation Abroad (KANGA)

Liberal Faylee Kurd Organisation (LFKO)

## Session One

Ms Berevan Doski (from KHA) commenced the evening with her introductory speech by welcoming the guests and giving a briefing of the programmes which would follow in the first session. She also introduced Dr Hiro Khoshnaw (from KSMF-UK) who delivered the message from the "Joint Committee for Anfal and Halabja". The message stressed and highlighted the importance of recognising the two atrocities committed against the Kurds as an act of genocide.

Following the opening remarks, Ms Lajan (from KRM) delivered a message from "The Joint Committee of the UK Branches of Kurdistan Parties". Later, the two messages were presented in a special composition of beautiful melancholic music and songs were performed by two of the most predominant and respected Kurdish singers of Kurdistan; Tara Jaff and Adnan Karim.

## Introduction

The programme consisted of two sessions with a short interval/break offering food and refreshments to the distinguished guests. The audience comprised of Members of Parliament, Politicians, Professors and academics, the Kurdish community and a mixture of other nationals.

After the loud sighs and running noses of the audience (evoked by Tara Jaff and Adnan Karim), Miss Shae Salar (Law student and coordinator for "The Joint Organising Committee) delivered a message from the survivors and victims of the Anfal campaigns. The message reflected the unfortunate experiences of the victims; their suffering over the last 17 years; living in uncertainty and still waiting for justice to be served. The message from the Victims and survivors of the Anfal campaigns is as follows:

*We, the survivors and the victims of the Anfal operations, are asking all of you to convey our message to all good and freedom loving people as well as those organisations concerned with issues of human rights in the world. We ask you to tell them about our long-sufferings and the pain we languish in, in a hope that you might be able to help us elevate some of it. Our sufferings have*



The Kurdish artist Adnan Karim set the audience ablaze with emotional performance at the Brunell Gallery of London University.

*persisted for 17 years, throughout which we have been subjected to the cruellest and the most excruciating of all pain: waiting.*

*Every one of us who survived, or rather left behind, the Anfal catastrophe, whether survived with other siblings or remained the sole survivor of his or her family, all of us have lost, literally lost, our loved ones in the ill reputed operations. We say lost because we don't know where they are or what happened to them. We heard rumours that some of them were thrown into acid pools; others have been used as guinea pigs to test chemical weapons on them, but most were summarily executed then buried, sometimes even still alive, in mass-graves.*

*We lived, for 15 long years, in a hope that they might still be alive in one of Saddam's dungeons, and when his regime falls they would be freed with the liberation of Iraq. Until the fall of Saddam, we lived this wishful dream, a glimmer of hope, a silver lining that soothed our anguish and validat-*

*ed our waiting, for the whole 15 years. And when Saddam fell, and there was no trace of any of them, it felt as if we were subjected to the same Anfal campaigns all over again. Such was the weight of the pain. Having waited for 15 years for a day that you might be able to see your loved ones, and when the day comes but they are no where to be seen, your hopes are dashed. It is very hard to bear.*

*Ever since that day, with every mass-grave uncovered and every torture chamber smashed open, our deep wounds started bleeding and the pain and suffering was revisited once again. We can't even tell which unearthed skeleton belongs to which family. The one prospect for passing our mourning could be through the construction of a monument for the victims. A place where we could take our grief and every now and then lay a wreath in their memory, instead of the scattered and hidden mass-graves where the remains of our loved ones still lie totally unsigned. Two years on, with an-*

*other phase of waiting that eats away our hearts, nothing has been done.*

*All of us now are waiting, this time for justice. Our eyes are on the day that we would see the heads of Saddam's regime, especially chemical Ali, put on trial for their crimes. It is disheartening, however, when we hear that there are some voices still rising in their defence.*

*\_ We ask you to spear no efforts to ensure that the perpetrators of the Anfal crimes are given a fair trial that would serve justice and to make the genocides in Kurdistan known to the entire world to prevent it from happening again.*

*\_ We ask you to help us to receive basic services. We are living in undignified conditions with most of our children are deprived from education largely because of poverty.*

*\_ Our villages, which were designated as no-man zones under the previous regime and were littered with mines, need to be rebuilt so our children can lead a new life.\_*



The 1st panel from the left; Dr. Salah Al-Sheikhly the Iraqi Ambassador, Dr. Teshk Shawis (Chair), Mr. Shorish Rasoul, Prof. Kevin Boyle and Ms. Helen Bamber.

*" We would like to ask your support in building a monument that would be the burial place for the remains of all of the unearthed skeletons of the innocents victims from various mass-graves"*

We ask you to help our youngsters to get scholarships in universities across the world in various fields and disciplines.

We would like to ask your support in building a monument that would be the burial place for the remains of all of the unearthed skeletons of the innocents victims from various mass-graves

Thank you

The families of victims of Anfal in Shorish and Sumood camps near Kirkuk.

## Session One Panel

The end of Miss Shae Salar's message marked the beginning of the first panel of speakers; chaired by Dr Teshk Shawis (from KSMF-UK).

In his introductory speech Dr Teshk noted that "the presence and participation of an Iraqi Ambassador in an event commemorating Anfal and Halabja in itself marked the beginning of a new era."

## First Panel Speaker

The Iraqi Ambassador, Dr Salah Al-Shaikhly was the first speaker of the first panel. In his speech he acknowledged that "Anfal and Halabja were horrific crimes against the Kurds and should be regarded as campaigns of ethnic cleansings against the Kurds." Dr. Salah Al-Sheikhly also stressed on the importance of compensating "the people of Halabja and the families of the victims". However, although Dr Shaikhly accepted the Kurdish right to fight for their human rights and the protection of their future generations, he said that "the Kurdish political leaders, with the political weight they carry now are well placed to influence events in Iraq but should argue their case in Baghdad instead of isolating themselves".

## Second Panel Speaker

Ms Helen Bamber, founder of the "Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture" talked about her personal experiences of meeting and listening to the many

victims of chemical attacks " who suffer lasting psychological trauma". Ms Bamber supported the continuity of commemorating Anfal and Halabja so "memories of what happened to the Kurds do not die". She also said "the depth of the suffering of the victims would be difficult to put a price on"

## Third Panel Speaker

Professor Kevin Boyle of the Human Right's Centre at the University of Essex, emphasised on the importance of accounting for the details of the events in Kurdistan and planning future actions against all those who supported the Ba'athist regime in Iraq. He highlighted the role of the International communities in allowing Saddam's regime to develop weapons and said that "the international community has a lot to apologise for as the Arab countries and Western powers including UK and USA were not only complacent but participated in the development of Iraq's weapons arsenal"



Mr. Omar Binakaie carries photos of the 5 members of his family who perished in the Anfal operations.



Mr. Adnan Kerim sings to the melancholic strums of Harp played by Ms. Tara Jaff

*"All of us now are waiting, this time for justice. Our eyes are on the day that we would see the heads of Saddam's regime, especially chemical Ali, put on trial for their crimes"*

## Fourth Speaker

Mr Hoyshyar Abid read out the following message from Adnan Hussein titled

*"To Rekindle Love and Restore Mutual Respect between Arabs and Kurds"*

My dear friends

My cordial greetings to you all

I would have wished to participate in this momentous seminar but, alas, my workload prevented me from doing so. However, I still hope to be able to attend part of your program and meet up with some of my dearest friends amongst you.

The first time I visited Halabja was more than three and half years after the massacre took place. I was in Iraqi Kurdistan in December 1991 on a reporting mission that lasted for two weeks. It was also the first time I return to Kurdistan after witnessing the march of the millions of Kurds towards Iran and Turkey. It was in my fate that I to march along side

them, walking for two days and one and half night, during the early days of April 1991, starting from the town of Rania on the Iraqi side of the border to the village of Qasma Rash on the Iranian side of the border.

By December of that year the conditions had dramatically changed since April of the same year. The bewildered people, who fled almost in their entirety to the boarders, haunted by the spectres of Halabja and Anfal, had found who could protect them from the Ba'ath regime and its' extremist chauvinism. It became possible for Kurds to return to their villages and towns and to live in a relative security in the internationally sponsored "Safe Heaven". As it also became possible by then for journalists like me to travel freely to investigate the scale of the hideous crimes that the Ba'ath regime perpetrated against the Iraqi people as whole and the Kurds in particular.

Even after the passage of three and a half years on the massacre, Halabja was still languishing under the weight of the catastrophe that the devastation of the chemical storm brought upon it. At the

outskirts of the city, the living victims managed to install monuments on the mass graves of the fallen victims. Whereas inside the city, the houses that came under the attack still stood as evidence to the destruction that caught it. More seriously, the living where the embodiment of an image, so vivid in expression and sharp in details, revealing the scale of the catastrophe that swept them and took away their loved ones forever. Children with no parents. Mothers with no children or husbands. Deformed and crippled people, churning in their pain from the chemical burns and the cancerous inflictions as well as the emotional scars.

Five years later I returned to the "Kurdish Hiroshima" on another reporting mission. This time Halabja was transformed. It was more beautiful. It was bustling with live more than ever. However, the signs of the catastrophe were still visible and would never fade away. The inflictions grew bigger, especially cancerous, dermatological and respiratory illnesses became raft. Moreover, birth deformities plagued even the new generation, with possible hereditary genetic mutation that, as





The British film maker, Gwen Roberts (3rd person on 2nd row) is flanked by Mr. Muzaffar Shafi'y and Ms. Bayan Rahman, representative of Kurdistan Regional Government.

*I was told by medical experts, would affect many future generations in Halabja and other areas that came under Chemical weapons attacks.*

*These crimes that were committed by Saddam Hussien's regime in Halabja and other Kurdish areas that fell under the spell of Anfal operations are, by all standards, crimes against humanity, prohibited by international law and totally condemned by all religious and civic ethics.*

*It is not possible to compensate the fallen victims of these crimes. Nor it is any more possible to recompense the living victims either. A limited compensation may be possible, but not through verbal condemnation and renunciation. The best possible compensation in these circumstances is to ensure that these tragedies would never happen again. And this would only happen if those responsible for these crimes are put on an open trial that would pass the deserving punishments on the perpetrators. And by offering official and recorded apologies to the Kurdish people in general and the victims of the Chemical attacks and the Anfal campaigns in par-*

*ticular, in national commemorations with ceremonies coinciding in Baghdad and Erbil, addressed by the elected Iraqi bodies, such as the Parliament and the government. And by ratifying a constitution that guarantees the establishment of a democratic – federal state in Iraq with multi-party system that prevents the occurrence of war crimes, crimes against humanities and all human rights violations.*

*Only by following this path we would transform the memory of Halabja and Anfal into an occasion of love between Arabs and Kurds. I hope that we will pass on this love to the future generations.*

### Fifth Panel speaker

Shorsh Haji, an academic with expertise knowledge on Anfal has carried out research on Anfal and previously published a book on the same subject.

In his speech Mr Haji explained the reasons behind the suffering of Kurds. He also talked about the future of the Kurds with strong

emphasis on the Kurd's right to their homeland and resources. Mr Haji said *"the Kurds have paid a heavy price for Iraq's unity by remaining within its borders. Protecting this unity has been at the expense of the Kurds' basic human rights as they have faced wars and genocide campaigns. In the name of unity, the Arab Shia and Iraqi Nationalists are once again trying to deny the Kurds the mechanism of protection and what is their right including Kirkuk, the oil and the federal entity. He went on further to discuss the unofficial referendum which was carried out in Kurdistan: "In parallel to the elections, over 98% of the inhabitants of Kurdistan voted for independence and unless Iraq grants and guarantees Kurdish rights, there should be no alternative other than full independence."*

Mr Haji's speech concluded the first session of panel speakers. Following Mr Haji's speech, a documentary by Mr Mr Aref Qurbani from Kirkuk Television was shown on the subject of Anfal. Furthermore, the end of the first session of the programme came, when a short play was performed



Prof. Dilawer Ala'addin of QMC delivers his presentation



Ms. Berivan Dosky (left), Director KHA, Ms. Hania Mufti, director of HRW in Baghdad and Mr. Karim Yildiz, Director KHRP listening to the speeches.

*"Only by following this path we would transform the memory of Halabja and Anfal into an occasion of love between Arabs and Kurds. I hope that we will pass on this love to the future generations."*

by Ms Annet Henneman and Mr Gianni Calastri from the "Teatro di Nascosto" (hidden theatre of Volterra, Italy). Their performance entitled "Memories- Yadgariakan" was a reconstruction of what happened in Anfal and Halabja.

## Session Two

Session Two began by a theoretical performance by "Shaho Drama Group" called "A message from the martyrs of Halabja". This short piece of drama was directed by Hiwa Sheikh. The underlining message of this play was for the audience to understand that Halabja was an act of "Genocide".

Following this piece of drama, Ms Choman Hardi, Kurdish Poet and the presenter of the "Remembrance of Anfal and Halabja" programme, recited two of her poems written on Halabja.

After Ms Hardi's poetry recital a documentary on Halabja was shown by Ibrahim Hawrami followed by a plea from Mr Satar Ali, one of the victims of Halabja.

## Session Two Panel

This then led us to the beginning of the second panel and the end of the event. The second panel was chaired by Berevan Doski (from KHA).

### First Speaker

Professor Dlawer Ala'Aldeen, an academic and researcher in Nottingham University, reviewed the national; and international post-Halabja reactions. He went further to describe the ways in which Kurdish Iraqi and non-Kurdish Iraqi politicians as well as the

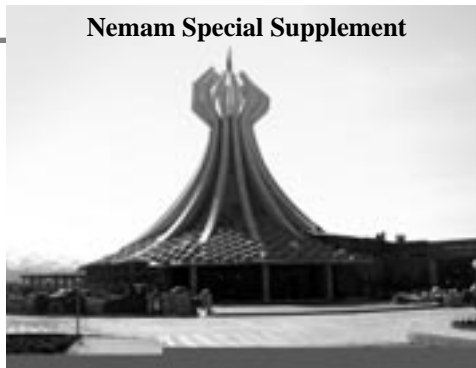
Governments of UK and US used the names of Anfal and Halabja for lobbying against Saddam during the build up for the latest war.

Mr Ala'Aldeen said *"it is now up to the Kurdish leaders to initiate the process of bringing the culprits to justice; seek compensation for the victims of Halabja and make sure Halabja does not happen again"* He concluded his speech by saying *"the Kurdish leaders owed it to the people of Halabja and Kurdistan to establish democratic institutions in Arbil and Baghdad."*

### Second Speaker

Mr Karim Yildiz, the Director of Kurdish Human Rights Project discussed the role of the international community and its responsibility towards Iraqi Kurdistan. He referred to the international complacency at the time of Halabja and how its results were and disastrous, he also stressed that no international community should ever be complacent with regard to matters such as ethnic cleansing.





### Third Speaker

Hania Mufti, the Director of Human Rights Watch in Baghdad was also amongst the members of the Second Panel. She described the process and difficulties of holding a legal tribunal in Iraq and making a water-tight case against Saddam Hussein and Ali Kimiawy (Chemical Ali). Ms Mufti described the progress of gathering evidence and emphasised the importance of protecting the evi-

dence, particularly during the discovery of mass graves. In her speech she also said that only one of the hundreds of mass graves were properly managed and documented.

weapons, on the local population of Halabja. The documentary showed disturbing, shocking and saddening images taken recently of people suffering from the long term effects of the chemicals.

### Fourth Speaker

Dr Sherzad Talabani, Kurdish academic and politician presented a brief documentary about an attempted research project on the long-term effects of the chemical

### Conclusion

After Dr Talabani's documentary footage, Ms Arezu Peshman (from HELKEVI) delivered the closing speech and concluded the event/programme.



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