

concentration camp called Topzawa not very far from the oil-rich city of Kirkuk, he saw tens of thousands of Kurdish children, women and men gathered at gun point in that horrible camp. Within hours males aged from 15 to 70 years were separated, put into sealed transporters and taken to the firing squad fields of Ar-Ar desert west of the capital Baghdad.

The anfal victims were taken in special transporters without ventilation or a drop of water to drink. Although the trip took about twelve hours but there was no access to the rest room at all. And when they arrived the death pits the systematic shooting started and the only way for victims to survive was to attack the headsmen with their bare hands taking the last chance to stay alive. Most of the survivals could save their lives by executing such heroic challenges against armed men of the Iraqi regime, including our hero Wahid Muhammad.

Arif Qurbany

## INTRODUCTION

Wahid Muhammad Kochani is the eye-witness number seven to be interviewed among the survivals of Anfal genocidal crimes committed against the Kurds. Four of them (all men) could escape the shooting process at the pits of the mass graves in the heart of Arabia desert in the western and southern part of Iraq occurred in 1988. The other three were all women from Halabja, who were taken with their children to be massacred in the prison of Nugra Salman in the heart of the desert between Iraq and Saudi Arabia.

Wahid Muhammad, along with the other survivals of the mass graves, was taken to the United States. As I did not have a chance to see him in Kurdistan I paid him a visit in his new homeland for this interview but he preferred to come back to Kurdistan to remember all the places where he lived, worked and faced the genocidal crimes of Anfal Campaign. He fulfilled his promises, came back and contacted me at his soonest. Luckily after more than 24 years of his heroic escape; he could remember very fine details of what had happened to him and his unfortunate family.

Our friend Wahid Muhammad was taken from his remote village in the south of Chamchamal city to a

Scores of them are still suffering from permanent health defects.

Few weeks after Halabja bombardment the operation of notorious Anfal began in which 182 thousand Kurdish citizens were exterminated in one of the cruelest genocidal crime of the human history. The multiple acts of genocide came under the name "Anfal"; a name that points to the eighth Sura in the Quran; this Sura is composed of 75 verses and almost all of them with the extreme way in which you treat your enemies; how and when to use extreme actions against them and how to forgive them and take a peaceful stand when the other side declares peace. One of the most forceful verses in this Anfal Sura is number sixty that states; "Prepare whatever force you can to terrorize God's enemy and your enemy"

Vastly enormous was the number of people who have been massacred during the Anfal operations ordered by Saddam Hussein, the chief of Iraqi Ba'ath Regime. Huge was the number of the families that suffered the heartache of the Anfal tragedies, very small was the number of the victims who could run to the safety. They could survive in spite of their wounds caused by shooting at the Mass Graves' sites.

The survivors are now telling us what exactly had happened to them, they tell us stories of the Anfal massacres which were enacted according to a decree by Iraqi President Saddam Hussein Al-Majeed. Saddam had authorized his cousin Ali Hassan Al- Majeed (best known as Chemical Ali) to execute the genocide attacks on the Kurdish nation. As for his part, Ali the Chemical had

## FOREWORD

The campaigns of the overthrown regime of Saddam Hussein against the Kurdish people in Iraq were numerous, and included a wide range of genocidal crimes.

The campaigns started with Arabization of inhabited areas in the southern part of Kurdistan including Kirkuk city, and several towns like Khanakin, Makhmur and Shangar. The original Kurdish inhabitants were forced out of their homes without being allowed to take with them their basic necessities, while the Arabs, who were ordered to replace them, were given the Kurdish houses, properties and real-estates for free!

In 1984, around eight thousand Barzanys men were separated from their families and were taken to be killed and buried in the desert near Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. Recent reports tell that Saddam Hussein's Deputy Izat Al-Duri had attended the ceremony of burring hundreds of them alive.

On 16th March 1988, the bombardment of Halabja and several other towns and villages in Kurdistan with strong chemical weapons had started. Thousands of innocent defenseless people were killed and injured.

also written stories of three women who were taken to horrible prison of Nugra Salman where most of their children had died under the torture or because of starvation and dehydration.

These three stories and three similar books on ethnic cleansing in Kirkuk are also translated into English by me.

Abdulkarim Uzeri

ordered his troops to shoot anything that moves in several areas in Kurdistan; those areas were called "Muharrama or not allowed to live in"

Besides, the Ba'ath leadership had ordered the destruction almost the whole country sides of Kurdistan; accordingly 4,500 villages and towns were leveled with the ground, burnt down anything green and dried out all the water sources.

Wahid Muhammad and other eyewitnesses tell us how they were taken at gunpoint from their homes to the camps of mass killing in Ar-Ar Desert west of Baghdad. Parents, children, brothers, sisters, lactating mothers and newborn babies were all alike, pushed into sealed vehicles, transferred to the gun-sights of firing squads and covered with sand by bulldozers.

The Anfal genocidal crimes were performed in several stages. There were eight operations in all. Before the international community could stop it; 182,000 innocent victims were shot and buried in mass graves all over Iraq. Some of the victims were still alive when they were pushed to the pits of the graves. Those, who could some way or another, survive are talking about their experiences during the mass killing operations. So far four of them were interviewed by my friend Arif Qurbani. This gentleman Wahid Muhammad Kochani is the fourth one to tell his story, and this is the fourth story to be translated to English. It is worth to mention it, that one of them was an Arab bulldozer driver who was ordered to bury the victims but this driver himself became a victim by the Ba'ath agents who shot him dead in Kirkuk, after his interview was published. Keeping in mind that our friend Arif had

came to power and started changing the demography of Kurdistan and the ethnic cleansing of the Kurdish people, this territory was cut off and attached to Sulemanyah then to Tikrit. Accordingly Kadir Karam and your village were cut off from Kurdistan and considered a part of the Iraqi Arabia; this caused a unique confusion to you and your people and raised the question of where you belong to! Where to process your identity papers?

Sir, you are right. We had to go to three different cities to process simple routine paper works. However, they tried to make lot of changes but failed to influence the greatest fact; the fact that deep from our heart we are only Kurdistan subjects with Kirkuki's identity.

**Do you know when did your forefathers inhabit in that area? Did they always live in Kani Kadir?**

Yes, my grand father lived, died and buried in Kani Kadir, the rest of our family are there and still living here. But older generations had come from a village called Kchan in the nearby Sangaw district. Nevertheless, our family "Zangana" has been living in this area for a very long time

**How big is your village?**

Around 35 to 40 houses

**Most of Kurdistan villagers are relatives, is it the same in your village?**

Yes, indeed the life in villages was like that. Others also came to reside here. All in all we all lived in brotherly atmospheres and just like a big family. The community consisted of four tribes; Zangana, Taliban, Gill and Dallow.

## **Here Is the Interview of the Eyewitness Mr. Wahid Muhammad Kochani:**

**I am very pleased to have this meeting with you. I think that we better begin with your full name and other personal details?**

My full name is Wahid Muhammad Saeed Abdul, born in a village called (Kani Kadir) in Bnar Gill district, east of Kirkuk on 1st July 1965. I am known as "Muhammad Kochani"

**Where does Kani Kadir belong to, regarding the administrative classification units?**

It belongs to Kadir Karam District in Chamchamal County. However several demographic changes had taken place.

**Your life time story is quiet unusual; you were belong to several administrations such as Kirkuk, Sulemanyah and Saladin!?**

That is true, although we have been living here in that small village but every other day we had to do the routine paper works in different cities; in Kirkuk, Sulemanyah or Tikrit "Saladin"

**In the Year you were born, Kadir Karam was belong to Chamchamal county of the Kirkuk governorate; so you born as a Kirukian, but when the Ba'ath party**

**Well, there was a school in your place; were you enrolled? When did you start and how long did you attend the school?**

Since I had to work hard throughout my childhood, I could only attend one year, but fortunately I can read and write in Arabic and English beside by mother language.

**Who forced you out of the school?**

My teachers were very satisfied with my level, but my parents needed me to work side by side with them.

**What did you do in that early age?**

Looking after the young herds of sheep and goats

**What are the most unforgettable memories of your life?**

Do you mean my experiences about Anfal Operations?

**No, before that, in your early childhood?**

Well, I was only five years old when I saw some Kurdish armed men in our house. I had been told that they were Kurdish freedom fighters (Peshmarga). They were our guests.

**Were there men from your village who volunteered as Peshmarga, were there casualties among them?**

It was in the village of (Khdir Ali) when in 1973 heavy clashes happened between the fighters of the Communists and Democratic Parties. Some communist fighters were taken prisoners and were killed in a squad fire. Three of those victims were from our village. That was one of the most fearful and tragic incident in my first seven years of life.

**Was there a governmental or religious school in Kani Kadir?**

The first school was established in the sixties of the last century. Beside the school there was a mosque. Traditionally students were enrolled in religious courses in the mosques during the Ramadan month each year, youth people were coming from other villages, our people were good believers, the Mullahs were all from our area but in the meantime the schooling process was going well.

**Will you tell me a bit about your family?**

Concerning my wife and our children?

**No, first about your parents, brothers and sisters?**

My father was born in 1912. My mother was 18 years younger than him. In spite of that they made a large family, they gave birth to four daughters and seven sons. The first child died in his early childhood. I can remember some of their years of birth; my brothers, Hidayet born in 1953, Habib born in 1955, Obed in 1963, Taib in 1968, Sarwat the youngest, in 1971. As for my sisters; Nabiha was born in 1962 and Shamsa in 1967.

**You are right; your family was a large one but was it easy for your parents to look after a big family. Can you remember the hardship during your early life?**

In General the living standard in those years was moderate, our life was not bad. We were farmers and grew wheat and barley, and we were also raising flocks of sheep. Our soil and water sources were good enough to grow rice.

**Are all the other brothers and sisters are alive?**

No, unfortunately not. Before the Anfal operations four of them died and during Anfal my brother Habib was killed. My sisters and my brother Sarwat are alive.

At that time, the majority of people were the revolution's supporters. There were about 30 Peshmarga in Kani Kadir alone. Among them were some communist fighters.

**Were the armed men of these two parties living in harmony?**

They were not working together. They only belonged to the same village.

**As you were getting stronger, did you change the nature of the work or remained looking after sheep?**

The traditions of the villages are leaving the children to do light jobs but when they grow older, they are asked to do harder works such as; farming and building works, and in some cases they must leave the house and gain cash money. As for my part, I left my home, in 1979 to work as a physical labor in the city of Kirkuk. The new job marked some changes in my life. I started living in a big city.

**Have you been in Kirkuk before? I mean were you familiar with the city?**

Yes, I have been there before because my uncle's house was there and one of my sisters was married in Kirkuk.

**Have you got a permanent job in the city or you were working on the daily bases?**

In the beginning, I worked on the daily bases by going to the city center early in the morning, waiting for some body to come and offer a work for the day for a certain amount of money. Later on I worked as an assistant to my cousin Assi who was a mosaic master. But three years later, in 1982, I myself became a master.

**Have you ever experienced air raids of the Iraqi overthrown regime or fights between Peshmarga and the army? Did the regime's men attack your village?**

In 1975, the people were saying that our area was hit by Napalm bombs, there were no casualties reported but cattle outside our village were hit.

**By that time you were 10 years old, can't you remember the collapse of the Kurdish revolution of 1975? Can you remember how people did react to that tragedy?**

I only remember the seen of Peshmarga who came back home, throwing away their weapons and expressing their dissatisfaction.

**Whom did they blame?**

Iran

**The revolution collapsed in front of Iraqi forces, what do you think the reason was to blame Iran?**

Well, I know that, but Iran disappointed the Kurds and led the movement to the failure.

**Whose Party's Peshmarga were throwing their weapons away?**

They were fighters of Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP).

**I know that they were KDP's men but why did they come to your village?**

They were from the same village

**How many fighters did your village have?**

No, she was from another village called (Kiraja), her family was no more living there. Her father was married to two wives, he transferred my mother in-law and her four children to Kirkuk, and the second part of the family was settled down in Kadir Karam. One of my wife's brother remained in Kiraja to become one of the Anfal's victims later on.

**Did you make children?**

Yes, three children. The first one (Hemn) was born in 1985, he is still alive and makes his university degree in the United States, our second child (Rebwar) was born in 1986, he too studies in the USA. The third one (Hawar), born in 1987 was killed in the Anfal campaigns that is when Baghdad's regime Helicopters shelled the refugee banker where many families sought protection!

**How about your parents? What happened to them?**

My father died in 1985 and my mother in 2005.

**You have mentioned that in 1983 you returned to your village Kani Kadir seeking a peaceful place. Do you mean that you were out of the reach of the Iraqi army?**

Yes, apart of the villages situated near the main roads all the other places were save to live because they were under the control of Kurdish Peshmarga. They were known as liberated areas, our village was deep in the heart of a librated zone. There we were really safe.

**Did you join the Peshmarga forces or just lived as a deserted soldier?**

I had joined the Kurdish forces of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) one year later, when in 1984 the PUK circulated an order to establish supportive armed forces from

**Have you spent the rest of the time working in Kirkuk or you tried other places as well?**

Well, my cousin Assi, who was in the meantime the husband of my sister, had enlarged his carrier to become a big contractor. He used to give me the mosaic part of the business. This means that I had to follow him and change the working place very often. Once upon the time, I worked in Tikrit.

**Did you speak Arabic?**

Just good enough to arrange my business with them

**According to your date of birth you became 18 years old in 1983, and by the provisions of the Iraqi military law you were obliged to become a soldier in the army. Were you enlisted?**

Before the beginning of the Iraq-Iran War, youth were used to go to the enlisting centers and become soldiers and serve the army for two years. This was a turning point in the youth's life. To became a soldier meant becoming a mature man, and ready to get married.

Nevertheless, when the fight broke out; things had changed. Soldiers were either killed or handicapped, or fallen as war prisoners, and those who survived should have remained serving the army for unlimited periods, on the one hand, and on the other hand; we did not want to sacrifice our lives to serve that regime whatsoever. Therefore, the people were hiding away in the Kurdish villages which were fallen under the control of Peshmarga. And I returned back to my village.

**Speaking about marriage, when did you get married?**

In 1984

**Was your wife from the same village?**

**Was this replacement just a routine show or you were really ready to take action when needed?**

As a matter of fact, it had happened several times, the local forces of Peshmarga were away for one reason or another, the villages of the area were attacked by the mercenaries of the government and started looting whatever they could put their hands on, or even detaining villagers and handing them over to the brutal Iraqi army.

Here the importance of the supportive troops materialized, they could stop such kinds of mercenary operations without the presence of a single Peshmarga.

**During the period when you started serving as an armed defender until the beginning of Anfal operations, was there any attack by the army or mercenary troops on your village? Did you take part in counter attack or counter offence?**

No, that had never happened with me. Simply because our village was far away from the military roots and there were several other villages surrounding our. Thus the resistance would have started long before reaching us.

**Were there clashes in the nearby villages? Did you ever go to rescue them?**

Yes, that has happened latter. Year by year the number of the paratroops grew because every new generation was ordered to be recruited but they weren't joining the army, they were rather joining us. Therefore, the number of deserters grew much higher. We started patrolling greater areas and just like Peshmarga we toured around the area, and when there was news of army or mercenary attacks on any area around us we would have rushed to stop them.

the deserter soldiers who came from different places, and young villagers, I liked the Idea and joined them.

**Was joining the PUK obligatory or voluntarily?**

Well the situation was like this; on the one hand, the families who had martyrs were not asked to enlist their sons as supportive fighter, but others were asked to join them, on the other hand we felt responsible to protect our families and our homes. Thus many of us who could afford to buy a gun had willingly volunteered.

**Did you have to pay money for the gun?**

Yes, everybody has to buy a gun with immunity. The revolution couldn't afford providing weapons.

**Couldn't you join them as an official Peshmarga? What was the difference between the ordinary Peshmarga and supportive forces?**

Peshmarga forces were regularly divided to troops and sub-troops. This means when your unit is send somewhere you go with them and stay away from home and family, while in our case we could stay at home and look after our families. In other words we were considered as self-defendant paratroops.

**Well then, as far as you were staying at home with your own gun and immunities why were you called supportive forces?**

Well, the idea behind it was; when the Peshmarga forces were going to fulfill their duties in other areas or going back to their headquarters, then their place became vacant and we were designated to fill their places. It's worth to mention that on one occasion, the Peshmarga of our area were send to consolidate the Iranian Kurdistan fronts so we had to watch the fronts and be ready to face potential enemy attacks.



Taza Shar. We had to watch those lines very closely to stop the frequent army attacks on the villages of that area. Therefore, we were treated like defenders.

**Who was the commander of your troops?**

Well we were divided to detachments. Each group had a leader who was chosen within the group.

**I mean who was giving instruction?**

The cadets and the in charges of the PUK.

**This means that you were a part of PUK's forces!**

At that time the PUK was the only effective party in that area. Most of the people were their supporters. But in 1986 after the establishing of the Kurdistan Joint Front; we have seen groups from Communist, Democratic and Socialist parties touring our area. We welcomed them and fought the common enemy together. We were united as fighters of one nation struggling to defend our existence. The question of whom do you belong to was never raised.

**Well you talk about troops of other parties, but earlier in this interview you had spoken about clashes between brothers. You were PUK forces how could you trust yesterday's enemies and fight side by side with them?**

I have told you that there was conciliation between them. All side-troubles were left aside. As from 1987 we had a chance to translate this fact to the reality. So when the army attacked the (Jalal) village; our troops jointly with the united parties' fighters challenged the government forces and defeated them. It is worth mentioning it, that there was an Arab fighter within the communist forces; his name was (Kais), worked in observations points and was assuring the people that the regime can not use

There were several defending combats without participation of a single Peshmarga. Actually, we were out to strategic places such as the county of Kifri and Sar-kalla in Tuzkhurmatoo. And whenever there was an intention to attack any place close to us we would have rushed the attack in the early stages.

**Did your supportive forces ever take part with regular Peshmarga troops in repulsing the aggressive forces?**

Yes indeed, on several fronts we were together and fought the enemy side by side, such as: "Tokan, Aziz Kadir, Warani and Zinana"

**Were there fighters from your troops laid their lives or wounded during actions?**

Yes, during the fight to defend the village of (Taza Shar), in 1988, a young man laid his life. His name was Adel. He was from the same village.

**Were you doing the preparation to fight when you received news of attacks or you were aware that there would be an attack?**

In the beginning we were not on alert, but later on we started making tours around, visiting the places which were close to the front line and knew what was happening.

**How was your relationship with the other villages?**

They were dealing with us in the same way they dealt with Peshmarga troops. They divided us to small groups; each group was getting a meal in a different house and then gathering in the village's mosque for the night rest. However, some could have spent the night with their host. Our touring was lasting long. Sometimes I was away from my family for two months, going around in far away districts such as Kadir Karam, Kormor and

killed in the womb, it was hit by a splinter. A seven years old girl was also fallen victim of an air raid.

In 1987, once more a young girl called (Narmin Rasheed Karam) was killed by a plane while she was trying to bring drinking water from a nearby spring.

**Could people go to big cities?**

Yes, by means of cars and tractors.

**I don't mean the means of transport but the permission to go shopping. Could the villagers purchase whatever they wanted, and were they allowed to enter the cities to bring food stuff and other necessary things?**

It was not bad in the early days but eventually things went wrong, only women and elderly people could go to the cities or places controlled by the regime. This situation had activated the black marketing. Traffickers had to pay to the soldiers and mercenaries to smuggle goods and that shot up the prices.

**Which sources of information were available? How did you know what was happening in the area? How did you realize that there were enemy attacks on other villages?**

By God, radio-sets were the only means of information, otherwise we were looking for people who were coming and going and bringing news of other places. In the mean time there were wireless equipments for communication owned by Peshmarga but they were rather for military purposes. Radio and Peshmarga were main sources of information?

**What do you exactly mean by Radio of Peshmarga?**

Well, Gali Kurdistan Broadcast was aired by the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) to become a source of information to

chemical weapons. Kais played a great role in shelling the army positions with artilleries after the (Dukala) combat but unfortunately he was killed in the fight with a socialist fighter called (Abdulla). There were casualties among us as well.

**Were there Peshmarga headquarters in Kani Kadir or in the nearby villages?**

No, there was not.

**This means that your area was safe and quiet until the operations of Anfal?**

I can only explain what was happening to our village. There were no attacks or combats but artillery shelling and air raids became a routine experience.

**Where did the shelling come from?**

From the governmental forces.

**I know that, but from which places?**

There were military barracks in Kadir Karam, Laylan and Nawjoll. There was also shelling from distance; from a brigade settled in Chamchamal, they were using Austrian-made artilleries and planes were raiding too.

**Were the air raids done by jet fighters or by Helicopters?**

Done by Helicopters and Hunters.

**Were there casualties caused by artillery shells or airplanes' raids in your village?**

Yes, that had happened. I think it was in 1986 when a woman called (Awat) was killed in an air raid by a Hunter plane. The poor woman was pregnant, she was awaiting but the baby was

Yes, they felt the same because the situation was crystal clear; there were many villages by the main roads leveled with earth and their inhabitants were taken to the concentration camps or obliged to move to the big cities. We also feared the actions; we feared the chemical weapons, the destruction of our houses and looting our animals.

Saddam Hussein had already designated our district as a (No Man Land) or not allowed for living. His soldiers were ordered to shot and eliminate whatever moved. In Arabic such district was called (Muharrama). Saddam's decree included our cattle and sheep, when they moved they became subjects to death penalty.

Indeed several times his air forces raided our sheep; the sheppards were shot dead along with their animals. People could only travel at night taking tractors which were driven without headlights because moving lights were targeted by distance heavy artillery shells. As a matter of fact the shelling, for whatever reason, was so intensified that caused many casualties in several surrounding areas.

**Well, when the threat was so enormous why you did not seek a solution?**

There was no solution; this nation was always living in such disappointing atmosphere. The one after one regime that came to rule Baghdad were considering the Kurds as their enemies. Generations had suffered for their oppressions. If there were some peaceful periods, then it was only to reorganize their forces. In our last days we were completely disappointed, all we could do was praying to get rid of Saddam Hussein. So the solutions were not in our hands.

**Did anybody inform the leaders of the parties or commanders of the Peshmarga that the threat is growing?**

all of us. And as I have mentioned Peshmarga were receiving notifications from their own leadership through wireless equipments and they were touring all around to remain in contact with the people.

**Did you fear that the Peshmarga and the Party's Radio were concealing the truth to avoid panic and to keep the people in a high moral; otherwise they would have abandoned their homes and living resources.**

So what? What would have the fear meant to us? Where to go should we have left our place? Leaving our place meant going closer to where our enemy was. In fact main roads, towns and cities were all threatened by the regime's forces. Only distance places like ours were safe.

**And when did you realize that your village is no safer?**

We were always under the threat; one our places were coming under the artillery shells the other day under the air raids. Our families were never safe. We could live with all that but when the chilly news of wide attacking on the Peshmarga headquarters, the destructions of town and villages, employing chemical weapons and mass deportations of Kurdish citizens spread out, we realized that regime is determined to exterminate our nation and destroy our homeland.

**The time you were going for touring for facing the army or mercenary offences, where did you leave your families?**

We never moved them. My family was looked after by my Father because we were living together.

**Did the people of the area felt the same unknown future as you did?**

occupation of the headquarters had made the situation much worse; Peshmarga fighters were disappointed and went back home. As for our part we were only asking God to keep our area away from the aggressions. We thought that if the worst happened we could defend ourselves with our light weapons.

**Did you realize that that military campaign was the beginning of the Anfal operations?**

No, never. I had only heard about Anfal almost one year later, after being exposed to fire squad in the deserts of Rumadi and could survive and come back to my family. Only then I heard people talking about Anfal genocidal operations.

**Did your place become a subject of military attacks after the fall of the PUK headquarter?**

No, after the fall of the PUK's headquarter, Karadagh was attacked then the eastern side of our area and the way out of the hell was blocked and then they turned their guns on us. After the occupation of Karadagh and the eastern part of Garmian; we could imagine what was going on. We felt the survival was difficult therefore we sent the elderly people and the families to the nearby Mountains to hide themselves in the caves and holes there. There were streams of water and bushes where the people could hide out there. The reason we took the families out we wanted to save lives as much as possible during the army attacks on the villages and burning down the houses. Burning the houses of poor people was the army's business as usual! And we also used to rebuild them in the nearest possible chance.

**When did you exactly take the families out?**

I can not remember the day and the month.

No, we didn't because they were aware of what was going on, they were in the same area. Actually the thing was that we couldn't imagine that the government forces can defeat the Peshmarga and the supportive forces. We were confident that we could defend our territories. But the use of chemical weapons by the Iraqi army had shocked and horrified the people. What the leadership could do was only meeting the people and tranquilizing them. They promised to fight till achieving the victory and advised us to make holes to protect ourselves and our families from air raids, artillery shells and chemical bombardments.

**What did you do when the whole area came under occupation? What did you say when you could not defend yourself?**

I am still on the same opinion; should the government have fought with conventional weapons and attacked the leadership and the Kurdish troops without forbidden chemicals they wouldn't gain any thing. In the mean time our people remained without protection.

**Do you want to say their morality was collapsed when the headquarters of the leadership were attacked?**

No, I don't want to say that just because of that the resistance of the fighters collapsed, but what has happened is; most of the Kurdish forces were withdrawn to defend the headquarters on the one hand, and on the other hand the fight there continued for a very longtime. The casualty among the Peshmarga was remarkably high, they were exhausted, many of them were wounded and they were very short of food, drink and immunes.

Our people were highly affected by the new situation. The news of the chemical bombardment of Halabja came like a shock to everybody. We lost lives and confidence. Naturally the

**by the Iraqi forces; how could they try to stop people from leaving the area?**

I can not tell the exact reason and I don't know whether they had got instructions from their leadership or they decided on their own. Nevertheless, they were telling people that the trafficking routes are not safe and that nobody knew what will happen to them in the big cities.

**This means that they were worried about the people and did not want them to take individual decisions?**

Well the people did not want to take unprompted decisions, they either wanted to stay by their relatives in the city for hiding out or waiting for another amnesty decree and then return home.

**Were there any decree ever issued to forgive people but the Peshmarga had stopped the people to return to the government control?**

There were rumors around saying that the authority had issued an amnesty order to forgive those who are coming back on their will

**Were their people who trusted the government, tried to give up but the Peshmarga stopped them?**

Yes, there was a group of families in a place called (Dawee) mostly women and children who wanted to go to Tuzkhurmatoo to benefit from a general amnesty but the Kurdish troops there had stopped them saying that the rumor was pure propaganda!

**Well then, when the army started coming to occupy the area, was their any resistance especially there were Socialist and Communist fighters side by side with PUK's?**

The people were very much confused; many of the youth have disappeared in the Mountains and the caves to join the

**Was it before the Nawroz (Kurdish New Year Day) Celebrations or after it?**

Oh yes. It was one week or ten days after Nawroz (21<sup>st</sup> March 1988).

**When you were out of your villages, in the hiding places of the Mountains and Valise; was the army on the way to attack?**

We hadn't left our villages.

**But who did leave to the plains and hills then?**

We had only taken the children, women and the elderly people out, but we remained in our defending posts in Kani Kadir.

**Were you confident enough that you prepared to challenge and defeat the army?**

Well, none of us ever wished to confront all those regular army and mercenary troops. But when you have no other choices, then you must fight for your life and the safety of your family. We were quiet sure that regime will attack us and leave no place for us to live peacefully in it.

**This means that the government had blocked all the ways to evacuate the place and go to the cities and towns before attacking you?**

The government had closed the main roads long before people think of leaving to the cities. And the Peshmarga, for its part had also blocked the side roads and secret routes. They prevented the people to leave!

**Why? You have just told me that they themselves were back from the PUK headquarter front and that they have seen the inhuman treatment of the civilian**

**Apart of women and children, were there other people about your age in the refugee place?**

Yes, there was a mixture of different people.

**Were there armed people among them?**

With me in the village?

**No, I mean the others who came from different places?**

Yes, most of them were armed.

**Well after the collapse of the main front in Taza, you went back to your home what did you decide to do?**

The Taza Shar front collapsed in the evening, the day after, early in the morning the military march had started from every corner. The army started burning every house and every village, and then they leveled them with the ground. As I have told you; the inhabitants have deserted their homes days before the expected attack, but in vain, nowhere was far for the airplanes, they could easily detect where the crowd was and could easily targeting them.

Dark smoke was covering everywhere. Houses were burning under a gloomy sky. Opportunist soldiers and mercenaries found their golden chances to loot house furniture, sheep and cattle. The Iraqi National army was rich enough to provide vehicles to load and transfer all the stolen goods. The looting was happening in front of our eyes, we were not angry about that, in contrast it gave us a hope and we were not worried about their material gains as far as they left us unharmed. And in the meantime, we disregarded the importance of material properties, it had happened before and we were able reestablish ourselves.

Beside the panic there was a confusion; nobody knew what to do. Most of the people were carrying some food stuff but not

other members of the family others just took the nearest route no matter where it was leading to. Many members of the families had never gathered again and eliminated in Anfal process.

The attacks were very intensive; we didn't know where to go, the enemy was everywhere, the whole area was turned to hell. The ground forces were bombing every square meter, tens of Helicopters were raiding on the fronts. Telling you the truth, the Peshmarga had challenged with fierce fighting in the main front, in Taza Shar, the battle started from the morning till four o'clock in the afternoon. The Iraqi army was almost defeated that is why they turned to unconventional weapons, they bombarded the area with chemicals and killed all the Kurdish fighters, only one Peshmarga survived; his name was (Kamal), he was from Tuzkhurmatoo.

Soon after their win the army started pouring into the area from everywhere; from Sangaw, Kadir Karam, Laylan, Kifri and Tuzkhurmatoo. And of course the sky was covered military Helicopters. Indeed there was no chance to resist such terror.

**Where have you been during that fight?**

I was in our village.

**How about your family?**

Some ten days before the attack, we had moved them to a hiding place near our village called (Aolla Hurri)

**Were all the people from your Kani Kadir or there were others as well?**

There were families from over fourteen villages.

**Did you visit them during those days?**

Yes I did.

are prepared for them! One felt sorry to those who stayed in hidden places! For they can not survive the chase of our Iraqi smart Helicopters!

Thus the propaganda of the regime was tempting and threatening in the same. They could persuade lots of disappointed people; they simply walked into the enemy barracks on their own will. But s for my part, a group of youth, decided to stay away from the enemy but taking our children and women to the town of Kadir Karam where, at least they could get some food. We did so, we were near the city in the dark of the nigh. We left them, we were all tears, and our hearts were bleeding in agony. We were not sure whether we meet again once more in our life time. We left them in the claws of wild enemies and to the decision of the destiny.

We ourselves returned back to our save claves, we though that we could stay away from the tanks' shells and airplanes' raids. We were only four young people; my brother in-law Assi, Lukman our neighbor and Muhammad from a village called (Lack)

### **Who did escort the families to go into the city of Kadir Karam to leave them with army?**

There were hundreds of families a long with ours. However, there were many young people who decided to surrender themselves to the Regime's forces; many of them were our relatives but they had different opinion. They left their affairs to God and headed to the Kadir Karam barracks.

### **Where there places in Kadir Karam to meet the people in case the enemy's set them free?**

The situation was like this; every villager family had had a relative or a friend in the town and in case of being freed from the captivity, they would have gone to the closest family.

knowing were to go. The women and children were caught between blazes of fire and the thick smoke, they were shouting and lamenting. There cry had mixed with roaring and thundering of tanks, rockets and helicopters; all that had deepened the man tragedy. Thousands were asking the heaven for help, but without any response. All that the Kurdish people were leaving their fate to God, saying that whatever calamity comes from him is acceptable by good believers, thus we remained patient and sticking to our faith. Many of us described the day as "The Judgment Day"

It needs a great phraseology to describe the day; people were puzzled, one running to left, the other one to right, some were meandering around but not knowing what he or she was doing. There was simply no way out. Whatever places we thought about were not any better than ours. For more confusion, people came from the strong hold of Kadir Karam looking for relatives to go back there saying that the government won't hurt anybody. Others came to tell us that the only safe places to turn to; were Laylan and Tuzkhurmatoo. People were obliged to think of any thing, some were refusing this idea others were accepting it.

We did not have a piece of mind to think correctly; otherwise who could believe in the good will of the regime that came with all those legions with all that tanks and airplanes? Why did they blockade all the roads and why did they put all those families under military siege? And why did they turn our small village to a concentration camp?

Eventually we had chosen to go to the centre of our county; to Kadir Karam. On the way there we had met people coming from there, seeking for their family members to take them to Kadir Karam. They trusted a governmental promise launched from the city's central mosque asking people to bring back whatever relatives they could, and then they will be all together taken to the bigger cities where good jobs and houses

confused; some were intending to surrender to the army, others had just joined us to wait for blessing of the Lord.

**Did you eventually decide where exactly to go?**

The night we left our families, we headed to (Bnari Gil), we were thinking to check the way to Laylan, Kifri or Tuzkhurmatoo but for our disappointment all the roads were patrolled by the Iraqi troops. We spent a sleepless night; thinking about plan to survive! Wherever I turned my head I saw a village was burning. The lights of burning house were showing the big presence of the Iraqi National Army. In the end of this nightmare, came a new gloomy daybreak, the sun though shy but shed more light on one of the Anfal's morning!

We could watch the area closely by looking through zooms; the whole place was turned to a large military camp. Nevertheless groups of unfortunate Kurds trying to go through and making their ways to the Kadir Karam barracks, we have got to learn that most of them were Peshmarga and that they were asked to surrender because the leadership had no any more solution.

**But when you have seen that the whole area were occupied, and on the one hand, you found yourself in the middle a big military camp and one the other the Peshmarga fighter were totally disappointed, and also you have the masses were going to put their lives between the hands of the most barbarian enemy in the world; could you eventually decide what to do?**

As I have explained earlier; we were all confused, we felt that the choices are not ours. Surrendering ourselves was nothing than committing suicide. Therefore, to remain free, or continue to hide out or fight until our last drop of blood was an honorable solution. In such nervous situation, the state of hesitation dominates especially when people making rumors around.

As for my father in law, he had two families;; one in Kirkuk and the other one in Kadir Karam. So I would have found my family in one of his houses.

**The families headed to Kadir Karam, how about you?**

We went to find any place where we could spend some days out of the reach of the army or the para-troops.

**You were telling me that the military helicopters were flying over your heads and that the chances were slim to hide out! So what was the point to go in hiding?**

Yes, that is what I had said, but the main difficulty was what to do with the women and children. Naturally, there were enough holes and small caves in the valleys and mountains of the area where individuals could feel safer. As a matter of fact there were also some man made refugees in every village, prepared to protect people from air raids during Iraq- Iran War and during the Iraqi regime continuous attacks on the Kurds. And in the mean time; our plan was to keep away from the seen just for few days. So when the things become clear we would have made our choices of what to do or where to go.

**Where did you and your companions go the night you had left your families?**

With my brother (Habib) and the other guys that I have mentioned their names, returned to the hiding places near Kani Kadir. Many others have joined us on the way back. They were all doing the same thing; "Leave the family in the town and watch closely what is going to happen"

What had makes the things worst were the Peshmarga fighter who were separated from their units. They were totally



**Yes, that's right! But were they in custody or were freed?**

We have not heard of them at all.

**You did not think of being detained by the Iraqi army?**

We worried about them too much; hours and days were passing like centuries, my heart was aching, I was missing my children all the time. It is not easy to describe your feeling when you can not meet your wife and children. In the mean time we ourselves were in a hopeless situation, we could help neither ourselves nor plan to do anything for our families. We were totally disappointed.

**How many people were spending that week together?**

We were a group of seven relatives spending our times together and there were also some acquainted men from the neighboring villages.

**Were all having the same opinion about what to do; staying the way you were or surrendering to the enemy?**

Telling you the truth; never! We were never having the same opinion. Each one was doing his own calculations. We were never able to decide what to do! We ourselves were not staying on one idea or one decision. Once we were willing keep staying with our wives and children facing our fate together. From such points of view; we were thinking to return to Kadir Karam and join our people, and then soon we would have changed our mind and keeping away from a ruthless enemy.

We were often talking non sense with ourselves. All these and you are talking about harmony or having same opinion?

Many people were coming and going around. Some were looking for their families to take them to Kadir Karam, and they were saying that until the day the government didn't harm anybody but they registered their names.

We have been told that all the returnee families were gathered in a place called; (Chami Allyawa) but their fate was not known. There were friends among us suggesting to go back to our families and share the destiny of our people, others were saying that the reason for not harming anybody was to collect as much as people possible then start working on them.

Whatever the case was; the uncertainty was the main dominant factor, it was not logic to imagine that all those armies and heavy arms and tanks to protect people who have no troubles with anybody. The last true news came from Karadagh and Sharbazher telling us in the same situation they put all the families in military vehicles and took them to unknown destinations. This news put as in front of one choice; not surrendering!

**For how many days could you remain in that situation?**

About one week.

**How did you manage food and drink for one week?**

The time we left our families, we have taken some foods with us. And those who remained around 10 days in the safer places have left some food before heading to Kadir Karam. The amount of food left in that place was enough for months but who could remain and enjoy it?

**The week you remained watching the situation, did you hear any thing about your family?**

I told you that we have sent them to Kadir Karam.

**With whom did you go back to Kadir Karam?**

Lukman was with me. We remained together until the last day and returned together to the town.

**When did you go back to Kadir Karam?**

As I told you; three days after Habib had left.

**What I mean is the minute you decided to go back without any hesitation?**

We made our mind at night and we waked up early in the morning; we took the way to the barracks!

**In that morning you enacted your decision, you went straight ahead to the place where you surrendered yourself?**

Telling you the truth; the days we have spent in the open where critical days. We were undetermined, we had taking decisions and changing our mind soon after. We did not know what was the right thing to do? Or what was the right way to follow? So many times we came to a conclusion and told ourselves that there is no other way out but surrendering to the enemy. This is how our days of hesitations passed. But in that morning we said; “enough is enough” and the shortest way to hell.

We made a very difficult decision. Imagine that we were deserted soldiers, carrying gun against the same army in a land described as Muharrama! And then after all you make your decision to go in and say hello to them! What man can expect from an enemy that brought all those heavy tanks, fighter airplanes and paid a hell of money to mercenaries to chase you?

Well; we had had only one point that works: Why not dyeing proudly with our people? What is the sense in dyeing in the middle of no-where?

**Well then how could you stay all together and not trying to have one word, one position?**

Who said we stayed all together? Every other day one or two of us were going away. Within just that week most member of the group had left and only three of us remained.

**You! Yourself told me that you were a group of brothers, relatives and acquainted people of neighboring villages staying together, so what had happened? Who surrendered and who stayed with you?**

Actually nobody could bear responsibility of the other not even brothers. Your brother could not stop you or change your mind to give up and go back to the governmental dominated area. The main reason was; nobody could decide which choice was the best to stay or to surrender? We were living in the dilemma of “TO BE OR NOT TO BE”

My dear brother Habib had within three days decided to give up but although he was much older than me, he had never tried to persuade me to go back with him to Kadir Karam. As a matter of fact he was not sure whether he was right or wrong. My cousin and the husband of my sister had taken the same decision without being influenced by us and we try either to have a say in that affair.

Our acquaintances had too, decided to go to Kadir Karam barracks on their own free will. Besides, many others had remained away from the scene of the government.

I think it was two days after my brothers’ departure when I started thinking of surrendering myself because I felt disappointed and thought it was better to bear the responsibility of taking my decision!

No, actually we just took the road to Kadir Karam without knowing what was on the way. We were not aware whom would we meet first mercenaries or regular army units.

**What did you do first when you became face to face with those whom you avoided?**

It was just the matter of no alternative. We had to go to them and meeting them faces to face.

**But what was the reaction of the mercenaries when they found to armed men approaching them?**

They were not disturbed whatsoever. I think they were there to wait for people like us.

**What did they say?**

Whom do you mean?

**Did the mercenaries themselves say that they were waiting for people like you?**

No, neither we asked them such questions nor they spoke about such matters.

**What had happen when you got closer to the mercenaries? How did you approach them?**

We went closer to them and greeted them. And then we told them that we wanted to surrender.

**Were they friendly?**

Yes indeed. They welcomed us warmly and asked us if we were Peshmarga! We told that we were just deserted soldiers and from the near by Kani Kadir village, and then they asked us to go with them to Kadir Karam.

**Did they take the guns from you?**

**From our conversation I've got to know that you were carrying guns; what did you do with them before entering the town?**

We took them along with us.

**Why you did not try to hide them somewhere or just throwing them away and not handing them over to the enemy?**

Believe me we were so much confused that the last thing to think about was our guns.

**Didn't you fear that you might have been caught with guns and regarded as Peshmarga? Was it not better to be without arms just like an ordinary citizen?**

Well, I have told you that we were never being able to make right calculations. Believe me days passed and I was out of my mind. I've only knew that I was alive when my limbs were moving; what I could only think of was stepping into the hell.

**What was your first impression when you entered Kadir Karam? How was the first view?**

You mean on the way before entering the town?

**Yes.?**

The shocking view of the demolished villages.

**Have you seen armies or mercenary troops?**

We have not seen the army barracks first because we took another way that did not lead there. But there were some groups of mercenaries.

**Does this mean that you know the roads that did not lead to the military basis and that there were only hired paratroops?**

**How far the Aliawa stream was from the mercenary post?**

It was also nearby.

**What had you seen there?**

We have seen right from the distance a great gathering of military vehicles, tanks and heavy armored Lorries. The number of the troops was incredible. I never liked to go one step toward them, my legs were shivering my heart was palpating. The closer we got to them the shorter my breath became, my mouth was getting dryer. I thought my sole was leaving my body. The whole world had darkened in from my eyes; apart of death machines nothing else could be seen.

My feeling was so strange that I thought all these armies had come to arrest me! It is true that we feared the mercenaries before but however, they spoke Kurdish with us and treated us nicely. They did not even disarm us. The solemnity of the army was terrifying. The worst thing to do is to leave your fate in hands of barbarian gangs of the Ba'ath regime, they hand no regard to the human lives. I had soon regretted the surrender of myself. I wished I would have been killed by helicopters' raid. I wished they have turned my body to pieces and turned to bates of birds, dogs and wild animals.

**At what time did you arrive in Aliawa?**

It was some thing around ten o'clock in the morning.

**Were there women and children in that place?**

No, they were all men. And I have told you that the mercenaries pointed out to the transfer of the families to Kadir Karam.

No, they were not concerned. The weapons remained with us. The situation was calm and we became somewhat tranquil. And we asked them if it was true that those who are coming back voluntarily will be forgiven and set free! They said only God knows what do they want to do with the people; at present they gather masses of Kurds and later will decide what to do with them.

We asked them if they can take us to meet with our families who came to the same place a week earlier. But it turned out that the families will remain separated from their fathers. Men will be taken to "Aliawa" and the families back to Kadir Karam (the week before the families were kept in Aliawa). Thus our tranquility did not last long. Leaving the guns with us was not meaning any thing, and we were not taken to our families either. The situations remained mysterious and as one of the mercenary said; only God and Saddam Hussein knew what was going to happen.

**Did you know to which Battalion the mercenaries were belonged?**

We asked them the same question. A group of them was belonged to "Sheikh Muatassam" And the other one to "Rafat Gali"

**Were they in big numbers?**

Honestly I can not remember the number any way, but they were around 8 or 9

**How far their place was from Kadir Karam?**

Their place where we have first met them?

**Yes.?**

It was more or less 15 to 20 minutes on foot.

The truth is that the surrender was unavoidable and inevitable. The simplest reason is that nowhere was left safe or even allowed to live in. Yes we came in on our feet, we put our lives under the control of the most ruthless regime of its time, and they never knew mercy or fear of God. They have collected all big troops just to detain some civilians; detaining them after denying them the simplest means of life.

Turning to the question of the mercenaries; there several battalions of them. The common point that collected them was making money. The more people they could detain and hand them over to the army the more dirty money they can make. This is why they put controlling posts on the roads and then sent searching detachments to collect as much as Kurdish young people to hand them over and cash money according to their number. I think in our cases, they provided the army with false information claiming that they had captured with our weapons not that we stepped in voluntarily. Telling so means more money to get.

I believe those mercenaries had repeated that game again and again; the reason why they wouldn't mix them with us providing they were having the same outlook and exactly dressed like us!

One thing more about these Kurdish mercenaries; why their chefs did not register poor people like us, as their men and save our lives especially we were all looking like each others and the Arabs wouldn't know who was who! On the one hand they would have served their nation and achieve the gratification of God, and on the other hand we would have remained indebt to them. I had really thought a lot about them; they were Kurdish like us and most of them were from our area! Were they peopling without conscience?

As I have mentioned; we were asked some common questions, our guns were confiscated and then allowed us to join the gross mass of people in the valley of Aliawa. The place was

### **What happened there to you in Aliawa? How was the routine work of handing over between the mercenaries and the army?**

They took us to some rooms on arrival, as if it was a place for registration. They asked simple questions about name, name, address, age and I was a Peshmarga or a deserted soldier! They put down all these information and took my gun, wrote down its number and asked me to go to where the crowd was.

### **Can you put me more in the picture?**

Which picture do you mean?

### **Can you describe the situation of the Aliawa Camp? How the general atmosphere was looking like? What have you seen?**

The situation was terrifying in the beginning, as I told you the whole world looked gloomy; there was not a smallest hope to survive of light. Wherever you looked at the view was the same; heavily armed soldiers, black tanks and vehicles loaded with armed people with wooden faces. Here we are in the middle of killers and criminals that we have challenged them for ages.

I was often asking myself what sort of trouble did we put ourselves in. we spent days and nights away from our dearest persons and in the end we voluntarily put our lives under their disposal.

It is by no mean easy to put .any body in the figure by putting into regards how many times these troops had attacked our place, how many villages they had devastated or how many houses they had turned to ashes? The army that I had surrendered to, had demolished towns and country sides from the Iranian border to the centre of Kurdistan, and had killed masses of innocent civilian with chemical weapons. What a dark days we are living in? Where all these troops come from to pour into these poor villages?

armless farmers had bought one or asked from their relatives to get them a gun.

This looks strange; but it came from the state of confusion that our people found them in. Actually there was no body to give us a piece of advice or telling us what was right thing to do.

**Who was spreading such rumors??**

Honestly nobody new. Probably it was the government itself or the mercenary chiefs who were known as military advisers or (Mustashars).

**Your brother Habib stepped in without any weapon, but you still found him with armed surrenders! How do you explain that?**

Yes, you are right I found him in Aliawa. We kept remaining together until we were separated in the Topzawa horrifying camps in the city of Kirkuk and taken to unidentified places for the massacre in the Arabia deserts.

**If you might remember; were unarmed and armed returnees' names recorded in one book?**

My brother Lukman and I gave in with our weapons. Our names were put in one note-book. My other brother Habib came in with out his gun but was registered with those who handed over their weapons. Probably the only differences were some remarks like he was armed or not and what the number of the weapon was.

However, the concentration camps were prepared for everybody; for children, women, elderlies, armed and non-armed returnees

**For how long were you kept in Aliawa?**

I don't know about those people, who were there before me, there were others even before my brother Habib. Most probably

spacious and the people were wandering freely without any interference. This position gave some more hope; we thought that such big mss of people won't be massacred. They would rather take us to new settlements and give us jobs.

**When you were taken to the crowd of Aliawa, could you recognize anybody who was there before?**

Yes of course, they were all our people, our brothers, our friends and neighbors. But everybody was waiting for more relatives. When we arrived they come to us asking about others whom we might have met in the free area or in the custody. Among them were people who surrendered too early and knew nothing about the rest of his family. The common friends were putting up more questions.

**How about you? Did you ask them about your brothers and the rest of your family?**

Yes of course, we asked about them as soon as we arrived and we found them?

**How could you find them in Aliawa, and as you said they had been taken to Kadir Karam?**

That is right. They arrived in Kadir Karam directly without meeting the mercenaries on the way to the town. But the army arrested them and took them to Aliawa. It seems that all the men who fallen under arrest were taken to Aliawa while families were separated.

**Was your brother carrying a gun on his way to Kadir Karam?**

No my brother was not carrying a gun. The majority were surrendering themselves with guns because there was a rumor saying that you better go there armed. For this reason many

**Did believe them?**

We believed them or not; were not the matter. We were helpless and confused people. We were once more divided. Some believed them and some did not. There were also governmental propagandas in the early days of the crisis that authority would not detain anybody and that we will remain safe and sound. However, things went wrong! They burned down all our houses and villages, and looted all our properties. So what difference does it make by taking us to Chamchamal and providing us with permission certificates?

No sense! What villages were they talking about at a time they were planning for concentrating camps?

**While they were talking to you, did you ask them any questions? Questions about anything like burning down your houses, and if they are really building new houses for people, and then bombarding them with chemicals?**

Not really, nobody dared.

**Were you threatened not to open your mouth? Or were there people who advised you not to ask any questions?**

No, nobody asked us to do or not to do this and that, we were all horrified. More questions might have lead to severe reactions.

**Was there any news from your family?**

Not at all. When I first found my brother Habib I asked him about them but he knew nothing about any of them. The same was true with other detainees; none of them knew anything about their families. All they could tell was that the families are in Kadir Karam.

they gathered people there as from the military attacks on the area. But our days were the last days of the camp.

**Before the start of the transferring from that camp; did anybody like mercenary chefs or soldiers speak to you, telling you where they were taking you and for what reasons?**

Oh yes, just before the moving they had gathered us and started talking about their transferring plan.

**Where was the gathering?**

In the same place, Aliawa was a big place. They had just gathered us and asked us to listen.

**How did they deliver the speech?**

Throughout speakers.

**Well done you reminded me with mean of delivering the speech, but what I meant was in which language?**

Well, they were talking in Arabic but through interpreters.

**Did you understand a bit?**

Well, they often repeating the same topics; praising Saddam Hussein and his wise leadership, and blaming Iran for launching a war on Iraq and they accused the Kurdish leaders for putting the Kurds in such situations and describing them as “Iranian Agents”.

But concerning our future, we have been told that in the beginning we will be taken to the nearby city Chamchamal (where the army headquarter was). There you will be registered once more, given permissions to go back to your villages, regaining your house furniture to be transferred to bigger settlements. “You will be living permanently in such settlements” we have been told.

**Can you describe the way you got on the buses?**

The cars were parked one after one. We were asked to queue up and walk toward the buses. When one of them was full then an empty one was made available. There were so many buses in the queue, they looked like chains of cars.

**Did soldiers or mercenaries get on the bus?**

Only one soldier came with us.

**Was he armed?**

Yes, of course!

**Which bus did you take?**

What do you mean?

**What I mean is; the buses as you said were stopped in a long queue. They were loading one after one; what was the number of your bus in that queue?**

I did not count them but the number was very big.

**What were the types of the buses?**

As I have told you they were Coasters and long armor vehicles?

**What about the one you have taken?**

Coaster 21 seats.

**Did you have a look at the bus's plate number?**

Not Really.

**Were there any other numbers on the car?**

I couldn't see any.

**Were there acquaints on the car?**

**When did the transfer start?**

On the same day.

**Can you remember at what time?**

Just about two or three hours after my arrival, it was early in the afternoon.

**Can you remember the week-day?**

No, I cannot.

**Can you remember the date?**

Not exactly but it must have been 10<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup> of April.

**What were the types of the vehicles prepared to transfer you?**

They were all buses and long police cars.

**In big numbers?**

Our numbers?

**No I mean the number of the vehicles?**

Incredibly a lot!

**Were all the vehicles military cars?**

No. there were two types of civilian buses; some of 21 seats, others were longer buses.

**How about the drivers?**

They were civilians too.

**Were they Kurds or Arabs?**

They were all Kurds, but they were unpaid.



Normally that road takes less than an hour, but arrived late in the evening. I think for us it took two hours or more.

**Why?**

Well. There were too many cars travelling as one convoy. They had to move slowly and carefully. Besides, there was a break on Mackan hill; that is why arrive late?

**Why did they stop at Mackan Heights?**

I do not know what the reason was but all cars had stopped for than thirty minutes.

**Did you have to get off from your busses when arrived in the barracks of Chamchamal?**

No, we did not have too.

**You were told in Aliawa that you will be taken to that military headquarter to get papers and letters!**

That is right. When we were in Aliawa they spoke to us through loud speakers saying that they were taking us to Chamchamal Brigade to be provided with permissions to return to your villages, and then you can prepare whatever you have, and then you will be transferred to new residential units prepared special for you. But none of those promises were fulfilled neither in Chamchamal nor anywhere else.

They were clearly cheating us, because they could have done such things in Aliawa without taking us to the brigade with all land and air forces.

Chamchamal itself was turned to a battle field. It was surrounded with thousand troops while tens of military planes were watching the city from the sky.

The barracks was crowded with military vehicles and civilian busses that had brought detainees from everywhere. Other buses where people toward Kirkuk. Our bus stopped near them and

Yes my brother Habib, Lukman and some other friends from the neighboring village.

**When you were ordered to get on the bus; was it arranged by calling the names or as you were queuing up in the line?**

Before getting on the busses we were ordered to queue up. We did so and got on the busses regularly.

**How did it happen that you, your brother Habib, your friend Lukman and some other acquaints were on the same bus?**

Simply as they brought the busses together and asked us to line up we had chosen the same queue and took the same bus.

**At the time when you were getting on the cars, which party was organizing the arrangement, the mercenaries or the army?**

I told you that one soldier came in with us?

**But I do not mean the inside of the vehicles! I mean who was patrolling around?**

The army troops and mercenaries were all around.

**Were there other guards with convoy of the busses? Or one car and one soldier was enough during your journey?**

My God! The whole road sides were planted with troops. Besides, there were a number a number of army vehicles loaded with soldiers and mercenaries. In spite of all these gunmen the sky was patrolled with military helicopters.

**How long was the duration to Chamchamal?**

with military planes. Believe it or not helicopters were roaring over our heads until the darkness of the night. Wherever you looked at was crowded with troops, it was only the bus drivers who were not carrying guns. The whole nation was terrified.

Everything was planned carefully in advance. No room was left for thinking about escaping attempts. And in case of finding a gap to escape through; escape to where? Even Peshmarga Fighters were surrendering themselves. In the mean time we were not familiar with area and we would not find the way out

### **For how long were you kept in Chamchamal?**

As I have told you that they started registering our personal and familial details. That was a long procedure, it lasted until the night. Only after that the move to Kirkuk started.

### **This means that you were transferred to Kirkuk and Topzawa by civilian cars!**

You are right. The same busses of Aliawa were used to take us from Chamchamal to Topzawa Camp. They did not allow us to get off the bus and we remained in the same seat.

### **Did the mercenary groups that accompanied your convoy from Aliawa to Chamchamal continue their escort until Topzawa?**

No Sir, their patrolling duty was only to gather their own citizens in places like Aliawa and Kadir Karam and take them to the Ba'ath headmen in Chamchamal and go back to arrange another round of hunting. There was not a single mercenary with us on the road to Kirkuk.

### **Can you remember at what time you had left Chamchamal?**

At night. I don't know the exact time.

the soldier went off but another groups of soldiers carrying pens and papers, and starting registering our personal data. Beside our personal details they asked about names of wives and children. They also wanted to know if we were gunmen and if we handed or weapons to the army.

Soon after finishing their registration works they left and locked the door behind them but the bus did not move.

### **Did the drivers remain in their cars?**

Yes, they did.

### **During the time of the soldier's absence didn't you ask the driver what was going on?**

We did talk to him. He said nobody knows what will happen to all these people. He added "Poor people are gathered from everywhere and taken to Kirkuk. We take them to Topzawa Camp where men, women and children are left without telling them what the next step will be!"

However, we were told by the mercenaries to surrender with our guns. They reminded us with story of the Kurdish revolution collapse of 1975 when the Peshmarga surrender with their and were left to practice their normal life and were allowed to go to their places and work. We were thinking of the same procedure, but we were totally disappointed when the man informed that Topzawa was filled with children and women. We got and impression that there was no way out.

### **In Chamchamal Brigade you had seen the situation and the bus driver told you that all of you will be taken to Topzawa in Kirkuk and that there was no hope to be released; did you think of the way to escape?**

How to escape? The road from Aliawa till Chamchamal was planted with soldiers and mercenaries. The sky was covered

filled with women and children. But I was still shocked when I saw the reality by my own eyes. Thousands of children, thousands of women and young girls, similar numbers of young boys and elderly men and women were packed in that terrible camp.

Actually when I have seen them, I thought that the whole Kurdish nation is gathered in front of my eyes.

It is true that when we met the mercenaries on the way to Kadir Karam, they informed us that men and women were separated. The women and children were all together in Kadir Karam, I became doubtful about the whole thing, I thought they, too were detained, but I had never thought that I will find them in concentration camp. Until the mint I have seen that crowd, I had always tried to be optimistic. Now I must think of my wife, children and rest of my family members. Deep from my heart I hoped to see them by chance in a bus, in the prison, in the camp or anywhere on earth.

I asked my good God to gather me with my family the way he gathered me with brother Habib after our tragic separation. God knows how much I missed my dear mother but what could I do to find her?

Somehow, I got a feeling that they too were detained that is why I was looking through the crowd to see a trace of them. The barbarian soldiers were so cruel that they did not allow us to look for even our small children. The only hope I lived for was very simple: To see any member of my family just before being transferred to the next destination.

**I should have asked earlier; were you searched anywhere during your detention?**

Yes, just once, when they took away our weapons in Aliawa they had also searched our clothes.

**What did they look for?**

**How was the patrolling from Chamchamal to Kirkuk?**

The same soldier who came with us from Aliawa had continued the journey with us. But there were several military Lorries travelling with us they were full with armed soldiers. I think there was one lorry for each bus.

**On the way to Topzawa, did you stop in Kirkuk?**

Well, we only passed driving through Kirkuk but we did not stop there. I knew that we were in Kirkuk because I was familiar with the city. However, it had taken about 20 minute drives to reach a very spacious barracks. The whole area was fenced and everywhere was guarded with heavily armed soldiers. The place was also crowded with military police. Once we got off the buses we have seen the judgment day on the earth. You could not imagine the number of helpless Kurds collected there.

**Did you enter the barracks with your busses?**

When we went through the fences, the cars had stopped. Crowds of troops hurried toward us. They pulled us from our arms, kicks, boxes and slaps started working on us. There behaviors were very wild and unjustified. They pulled down all the travelers and order the empty buses to the stay away. Once more kicks and hitting us with guns started and we were taken to the collected crowd. Some of them were just brought by other cars, while others were there days before.

**Were all the detainees about your ages?**

Do you mean the detainees in the camp?

**Yes, I do mean those who where there before you.**

The Coaster driver, who started the journey with us from Aliawa, as you might remember, told us that Topzawa was

For sure not. What I mean is the convoy of buses that came together all the way from Aliawa, Kadir Karam and Chamchamal. All the detainees of these busses were gathered together.

**Did they register your data again?**

Yes they did and questioned us once more?

**Were the question new ones or the same old ones of the Chamchamal brigade?**

No, in Topzawa, they came up with new questions.

**Like What?**

Apart of name, age, address, and occupation and surrendered with or without gun, they asked about your family and relatives, their whereabouts and if they were in known cities or towns. They asked about the address of your wife and children. There questions were about your military status and if you had deserted the army or joined Peshmarga and the in charges of Peshmarga you been in contact with, and if you have ever been out in a combat against the army or not.

**Did you answer all these questions and told them everything?**

Oh yes, straight ahead. I told them everything. I told them that I had deserted them, join the civil defenses and carried gun, and that I surrounded with my gun. I had also spoken about the unknown fate of my family, I told them that they are in captivity and that they might be inside the same camp. But my brother Habib told that he was a simple farmer and never had anything with Kurdish revolution and had never carried a gun.

They were looking for pistols and Knives. Personally I was not carrying such things, but I have seen piles of knives and nail cutters taken from detainees.

**And how about Topzawa?**

They started kicking us all around, and then they took us to the gates of the halls. But before entering them there was another routine of taking personal data and then they searched us once more. They then forced us to take off any type of military dresses such as shirts, jackets and belts (it was a tradition for the young people of those days to wear military dresses). They had also taken the simple thing like; combs, rings, cosmetics and similar things.

**Was your group mixed with others or kept alone?**

They took us all to an open area. There were other mass gatherings around. They told us through loud speakers that after reading the names we can join favored groups. For me it was a very reluctant decision; on the one hand I was willing to go around and have a look for my dear ones, and on the other hand, we had feared to be lost in the crowd and instead of finding other I might have lost contact with my brother Habib. This made some more confusion to me, I found myself unable to decide. It is a psychological fact that when you are in a fearful situation, you prefer to stay close to your people. This is true and it was also true that in case of Topzawa getting closer was very fearful.

**Were you left alone?**

Yes, as I told you, a big group was made from our people and assembled together inside the yard?

**Do you mean the 21 passengers of the Coaster bus?**

As you might remember the soldiers have looted our belongings, including the wrist watches. Therefore I did not know what the time was but the whole thing took about an hour.

**Is it imaginable that all those detainees were questioned in just an hour?**

You know the thing was like that; the registration was going on, in several places and I think it only took an hour with us. The officers were in a great hurry. Lines after lines were approaching, and they were soon sent to the halls. While we were heading to the halls; I have seen others getting off from the buses and coming to go through the same routine. In the mean time there were others prepared to take on, on other buses and transferred to the unknown destination. Thus Topzawa became on the busiest transportation center I have ever seen in my life.

**How was the weather?**

What do you want to know about the weather?

**Was it cold, raining and foggy or was it hot?**

Well, the whole thing happened 20 days after or New Year Day, or about 11<sup>th</sup> April. The weather is often nice in April. But on that night it was a bit chilly and rainy.

**Were there other people in the hall?**

It was empty when we were brought in. But no doubt there were others before us. We have seen the mess around. That indicated the presence of a group who were taken away.

**Actually I should have asked earlier about food, you arrived in Aliawa before noon and remained traveling with them until late in the night; did they serve any meal?**

**Yourself and your brother were registered in the same page?**

When they came to reregister our names; they told us that queue up with anybody we wanted. And thus my brother, some close friends and I stood in one line. But there were several officers behind the desks with several soldiers to keep the rule and regulation.

There were also Kurdish translators helping the Arab officers. However when we arrived near the registration desk, we were asked to take different lines. Habib, as my older brother, was always in the front; so he took the first chance and I went to the next one. But just after the registration we were gathered in the same hall.

**What had happen afterwards?**

There were numerous large halls as if they were designed for poultries or specially designed for military purposes and pack big numbers of detainees, I don't know. What I know that each one could accommodate from 500 to 600 people. But during the transfer to the halls the grouping was disturbed. Brothers and friends could not keep accompanying each other anymore. This was particularly painful for young brothers who wished to stay with their caretaker till the last moment.

**What was the time then?**

It was night time, and I told you that.

**Yes, you told me that you arrived at night but there was a long procedure waiting for. You had to go through body searching and answering lists of questions. All these routine works must have taken time; so at what time did you enter the hall?**

us but for one reason or another they were not transferred to other destinations.

**Where did they come from?**

They were all from Garmian.

**Did you know them? Were you acquainted with any of them before?**

Remember that I told you that I had worked in Kirkuk for several years and that when I was In Garmian I was just a deserted soldier and I had to hide out and not mixing with others. Indeed I could recognize some faces from our area. I did not know them in person.

But I can assure you that they were all from the towns and villages of Garmian, their outlooks were telling that. I can tell you that some of them were Peshmarga fighters whom I had seen before. To be honest I did not any of them by name. in the mean time the crowd was so great that we could not go around and talk with anybody .

The question of where did you come from did not make any sense, the real question was where do they take us to?

**How was your feeling when you were separated as a group of young people? Groups were brought from the other halls and mixed together with yours. Did you think what the purpose could be?**

It is difficult to answer this question now. I mean after the horrible experiences that I have had. After what had happened to me; it is not easy for me express my feeling at a time when I did not expect that terrible fat.

In fact we were frightened. As for my part I did not exclude the end of my life, but I never ever imagined the Iraqi army to be so barbarian and so inhuman to massacre a big part of the nation for no reason, no reason at all.

Well, when we arrived in Aliawa; we were carrying some food and also some money on us. Any person became hungry we could have got him a piece of dry bread. However food was a smaller issue, we could keep on having some simple food until we arrived in Topzawa where they had taken away everything they could put their hands on even a piece of bread. So everything was taken away. But probably somebody could have hidden some money somewhere.

Nevertheless, while we were in the hall they threw some dry rolls of bread to us and the people rushed on them because they were kept for long time on bare bread and water, they were starving. As for my part, I felt no energy no strength in me and I was sure the others were the same. But the worst of all was the access to the water circulation. Because of fear of death and being kept for a long time in the buses we badly needed a place to pass urine.

**How many detainees were there in your group when you entered the hall?**

do not know the correct number at all, because our group was not the only one. They brought in several other groups along with us. They were all young people. Some were brought from the other halls of the camp. I felt that they were in Topzawa before us.

Gradually the number grew higher and higher. In the end hall was completely packed. We could hardly get a place to move, we could not sit but we had to remain standing on our aching feet.

**How do you know that they were in Topzawa before?**

Because I heard them speaking about the halls that they were brought from. I even heard one of them saying that he was there for three nights. This means that they were detained days before

I was not alone suffering from this throttling nightmare. I could not see anybody asleep or relaxed. Some were crying for their families and children, some were blaming the whole nation's bad luck, the nation that had lived always in tragedy. Some described the situation as the Judgment Day in a wrong time and in a wrong place.

However, the long night came to an end. The dawn was not carrying any hope either. The darkness dispelled and could see that some big empty buses waiting for us outside. "They are to take us to somewhere else" I said to myself. I knew that from the heavy traffic of the vehicles bringing newcomers and taking other to unknown places. And it was our turn to be taken from that hell of Topzawa.

We waited and waited but nobody approached us and the buses were left without drivers. That meant some relieve to us, we thought of an amnesty being issued and we would be released. We were, as I thought, a bit over optimistic because the operations of bring new unlucky people were continuous. Parallel, there was new transferring to new destinations. We were just creating hopes that soon evaporated.

A new day started but in a stinky crowded hot hall. It was difficult to breathe in. I felt there was no air inside the place. It was somehow gloomy outside, it was rainy and misty, the sun was shy and hiding out. However, we liked to be taken out at least we could have filled our lungs with fresh air, and we liked to see the gates opened.

**Did anybody open the gates for you?**

Oh yes, when the sun shined they let the big doors widely opened.

**You have just said that there was no sunshine and was raining outside do you mean that the day started or the sun come out?**

Besides, we spent a day with the mercenaries and the Iraqi army in Aliawa before being transferred to this hell of Topzawa Camp so was it not better to shot and kill us in the isolated valley of Aliawa? And what was the point to bring all these women and children? What was the wrong doing of the new born children?

In the end of the day I thought that they would accuse us of some wrong doing and that they will send to the courts to be imprisoned or even getting death penalty. But to open fire on us blindly and through us with bulldozers into holes of mass graves was beyond my imaginations.

We spent a terrible night in Topzawa. It was a heavy nightmare for me personally. Many thoughts were coming and going in my mind. I was asking myself what was going to happen to me to my brother, to my wife and lovely children or my dear mother and other brothers and sisters. Well if the regime's intention was killing us all together why they did not use chemical weapons the way they did in Halabja? Or when were all defenseless in Aliawa why they did not finish us once forever?

I was trying to give myself some hope saying that if the intention of the government to kill us all they could have done that in our places without making this fuss of crowds using all these buses, halls and troops! No they never do so, it is nothing more than some legal questioning and short term imprisonments and then they let us to go back to our families, work places and our normal life. But there were also dark sides of the situations; buses filled with innocent people of all ages were coming and going out taking others to unknown destinations.

The confusion was apparent on everybody's face. As for my part, I was doing different calculations almost every hour. Thus I spent the whole night thinking. I did not sleep at all, I spent a restless night but I could not work out anything.

**Was your brother with you in the same group?**

No, no more. Unfortunately we were separated. From the moment that I was put in the vehicle we were cut off. I did know if he was taken to another bus within the same convoy or he was taken to another destination, or he was kept in Topzawa!

**Can you describe the way you were taken to the bus? Was one by one in a queue or irregularly pushed in?**

Well, when they took our group out of the hall, our number fitted the seats of the bus. Most probably they had counted us but without letting us knowing it. Once we were in front of the gate, we had to queue up and go toward the bus which was just about twenty meters away.

The short distance between our hall and the place where the cars parked was heavily guarded with soldiers, they were ready to shoot! Their K47 rifles were set towards us. Probably they were thinking of disobeying or attempts to escape. The situation looked like being ready to fight in a front with enemy because their guns were tight to their shoulders, watching us closely with fingers on gunlock.

They were shouting at us in a very orotund voice telling us: “Do not raise your head, do not look right or left, go straight ahead!”

**Were you eye-folded when taken to the car?**

No.

**What was the type of the cars?**

This is a good question. I have not seen such cars in my life, neither in films nor on televisions. During my work in Kirkuk I travelled to Baghdad several times, took many means of transport but never such buses. Even during my stay here in the United States of America I did not come across them. As if these buses were especially manufactured for Anfal purposes!

No, the sun really shined. You know it was spring time. The weather was changing very frequently; Sometimes it was raining then it was stopping and sun was shining, some time the both were happening together. However it was called outside!

**At what time did they open the door?**

I don't the correct time. It was forenoon and the sun was getting warmer.

**What have you seen when they opened the door?**

What could I see in such a crowded area apart of halls packed with people and buses waiting for them?

**Did they call your names when they opened the gates?**

No, they did not call any names. I cannot remember everything as it is. I am not sure whether they were doing some counting not but when we got on the vehicle the number of the detainees was the same as the number of the seats of each bus. I am sure that they knew the number of the seats in each bus. This means that each group was according to the size of the transport.

**When were you taken out of the hall?**

What have I been talking about? Didn't I tell you that the sun was getting warmer?

**What I mean is; with which group were you taken out because it seems that a certain group was taken in a certain time?**

Oh yes, for my bad luck I was within the first group. I think the reason was that I was standing near the gate to get some fresh air. So when they opened the door I was taken out soon.



The person I knew best was Anwar Tayar. He was a Peshmarga in the forces of Mahmud Sangawi, a well known personality in the whole Garmian. He used to visit us at home. But I do not know how and why he surrendered to the Ba'ath regime! Anwar was a very friendly man, even in Topzawa he was surrounded with a group of men, most probably they were Peshmarga with him.

**When they pushed you into the car, did you somehow notice that the vehicle was used before to transfer unlucky detainees like you?**

The night that we spent in Topzawa was a restless one. The whole night buses were bringing in and taking out the defenseless people. However, I could not see what types of buses were used for the transferring. I did not know whether ours was among them or not. But when we entered the car we saw some evidences proved that the bus was used by others.

**How did you know? What were the evidences?**

There were no toilets in the vehicle! The detainees were obliged to use the floor of the car to pass water. We found the car was still wet and nobody bothered to clean them. The strong evidence was the writings of the victims; one of them wrote on a seat that they were taken to the border of Jordan while another had written that they transferred to the Saudi border.

**But you have told me earlier that all your belongings were taken away during the inspections. So how did the others get pens on them to write their remarks?**

I wish I know how that happened. Nobody in my group was carrying anything to write with. Perhaps the inspections in other places were not as serious.

**You did not tell me the type of the bus.**

I did not tell you because I did not recognize it. They looked like ambulances. They were white in color, bigger and wider than real ambulances but they were not very high. There was only a small door on the right side of the car through which we had difficulties to pass through.

Once I entered I had to stop in a little space behind the driver then to go through another door to the seats. There were rows of seats one after another arranged like seats of the calibrations. I think each row consisted of five seats and all together there were seven rows of them in the hall car. The car was made to take thirty five passengers.

The car was without any windows or ventilators as if they were designed to suffocate us. Once I was in that car I understood that the idea of releasing us or taking us to the courts and imprisoning us was too naïve. I don't think anybody in that car dreamed to be ever released.

The night before when we were packed in the hall, we have had some glimpse of hope; at least we were thinking of different chances but our main complaint was not having enough air to breathe. For that reason the idea of taking us somewhere else was somehow acceptable, and they are transferring us but in coffins! Even if they don't kill you, you will die in this strange box. The only window opened to the world was a little square glass on the door between us and the driver and that fenced with iron bars.

**Did you know anybody in the vehicle?**

As I have mentioned earlier I did not live long enough in our area to know many. I knew people by their face complex and outlooks but very few by names. Nevertheless, there are common faces I have seen around in the area.

When I looked at the locked door with through the fenced small window of the locked door between us and driver cabinet; I could see yet another small opening looking onto the yard. Anwar Tayara and I had a look outside and saw queue of other buses waiting to be filled. Our expectations were either we will be freed all together or we will be taken to our last destination. Therefore the stoppage was to wait for the other buses to be ready no matter where they go to.

**Could personally see the view through the little windows or the openings?**

I could see much but Anwar Tayara was in a better place to look through and see the outer view. Anwar was sitting on the second seat. His seat was between mine and the other three on his right hand. He was right opposite the windows.

**When your car along with the others: Did you know what the time was by any chance?**

Morning.

**Yes it was in the morning but at what hour?**

We knew nothing about the right time. Nobody was carrying a wrist watch. All I can tell is that the sun was high in the sky.

**A moment ago you said the a little hope came back to the atmosphere when the vehicle stopped shortly after the start, and then you understood that it was only to put your other Kurd brothers on the same road! How did your feeling change?**

That was the end; end of hope. I considered the moment as the end of our lives. I realized that there were hours or days between life and death, no matter where they were taking us to paradise or to hell!

**You described an open space and a door between your seats and the driver cabinet, what was it good for?**

The space was used by the guard.

**Was there a guard in the car?**

Yes of course, when we were forced in the door was locked behind us a soldier came and took a seat in that space.

**Was he carrying a gun? If yes what type?**

Oh yes, he was carrying AK47 Rifle.

**How was he dressed?**

I told you that he was a soldier! What do you expect a soldier in the Iraqi army to wear?

**I mean what was the color of his uniform?**

He was wearing spotted green uniform

**When they pushed you in and locked the door behind; did the car move?**

In the beginning it moved for few hundred meters then stopped and waited for a long time.

**Did you know what the reason was?**

There is a public saying among the Kurds that a drowning man tries to use a little straw to reach safety. Although we were totally hopeless but loved the life until the last moment. We could not do anything but ask good God to keep us alive. When the car moved in the very beginning, we all did our prayer and preaching “Islamic Shahada” and we all said that our end is near. But when it stopped we all hoped that the decision of finishing us would be changed.

**You described the cabinet of the driver and the small place of the guard. You could see the guard through the tiny window; did he look tired or exhausted from the heat and lack of water?**

No, he was neither tired nor dehydrated. He was moving normally. For sure the driver and the guard had something to drink and to eat. I think there was a cooling machine in their places. Most probably the fresh air was coming from the roof of the car. Actually when we were trying to see outside through the hole of the door we were feeling a breeze of cool air.

**Did any of you asked the soldier questions, through the hole, such are where they were taking you and what will happen to you?**

Yes, we asked him such questions, but he had never bothered to listen or to answer. Somebody asked him for some water but his answer was he would better wait because the place we are taken to is provided with everything we need!

**Did you believe him?**

Believe in what? And if you believed in what he said what benefits we could get in that hell. We were desperate for a sip of water. We were just about dying in that car so what difference could it make whether they were taking us to paradise or to hell?

**From the Topzawa concentrations camp to the killing field, were stop-over's?**

We did not know where the destination was or how did it look like. Any stop over for any reason looked like the end point for us. No place made any difference to us. But Anwar Tayara was saying that he worked in the field of road construction before joining the Peshmarga forces and that he knew the places where we were passing by. I was not sure if he

I reached a point of disappointment. We are now in the coffin, no window, and no air, not even a last look at the world that we are going to leave behind soon. I did not think about my life anymore but honestly I wished to die with my people and on my soil.

Time to miss my wife and children, time to think of new questions: they kill me, and they kill my family too. But why they don't they kill all of us together? Why they deprive me from embracing my little child? Why do I have to leave this world without knowing the reason and without knowing what is happening to my dear mother? Where do they take us? Why all these long ways to go? Why don't they finish us in our land all together?

It is true that we all love life and we all love to live longer. It's also true that our life comes to an end. The death is dreadful; we all fear it, especially when we see it is getting closer. The moment we surrendered to the enemy we were getting nearer to the brink of death. The longer the delay; the deeper the pain would be. I wished they have killed us without this torture.

When they pushed us in this horrible car there were thirsty and hungry detainees among us. There were people desperate to use the toilet. Beside all these there was not a breeze of fresh air. All the killing elements like hunger, thirst, desperation and lack of oxygen were composed together in the coffin like bus.

The fear of death was easier to bear than the suffering we had faced in coffin-box; the malodor, the filth evil smell of the man left out were unbearable. Then came the attacks of heat dehydrations and. Some of us were so thirsty that they started lapping the wet remains on the bus floor by their tongues and lips. Our urine became an irresistible material to save. Our luckiest people were those who could keep their passed water in his shoes. Some were wearing sport shoes. all they could was squeezing to get some drops of urine.

**Did they change the guarding soldier or he remained where he was?**

Oh yes, both of them were changed.

**Was the new guard in the same uniform and color like the one that he had replaced?**

To be honest I did not notice the uniform or its color. To they were all the same, the same killing machine.

**Could you somehow realize that the guards and drivers of all the buses were changed together?**

We could only look through a narrow space and see a very limited area. The mirror of the driver was also showing a very small rear view, through these points we could see a small part of what was going on. A small part but the most important and the final scenery of the drama; the bulldozers and special army units in Chevrolet cars! And thus we could see the end of our lives through a small corner of the bus's window.

Once we have seen these heavy equipments and killing troops, we realized that we will be shot dead and thrown in the pits dug by bulldozers. We realized that the eight hours journey was going to be ended. A long journey arranged in a box without having a breeze of fresh air and not a single drop of water. We were so dehydrated and so exhausted that we drum only about being left for one minute in a fresh air before ending our lives. The stop over by the police station was the most difficult moments of the journey because when the car stopped it also stopped the air current. The car became hot like an oven. It was unbearable; we hoped to reach the death field one minute earlier.

Moments of changing guards were too long for us, too long for anybody struggling to get a breath. Eventually the cars resumed their journey and Anwar Tayara's turn came to say that he can

was telling the truth or he just wanted to seat by the hole where some fresh air coming from. Once he told us that we were on the way to the city of Mosel! He reminded us with the city which was specialized in mass execution of the Kurds. His words made us more certain that we will be executed too. One hand we were thinking on lighter punish, on the other hand of executions in Mosel where we could see our families before enacting the death order. There was a tradition concerning the execution of the Kurds in that city to bring your family for a short meeting and handing them your belongings and your will. That is why the idea of taking us to Mosel was somehow more preferable than other butchering slaughterhouse.

We had spent some more hour travelling, all of sudden, our friend Anwar said: "Now we are on the way to Rumady". I was not sure this time either about his credibility. Probably he wanted to calm us down. Wherever the direction was, the road was endless, we travelled for more than eight hours then all the cars stopped for a short while then the mysterious journey resumed. We thought that we stopped at a filling station, but those who could look through the opening saw a police station and change of the guards and drivers.

**As for your group did they transfer you to a new vehicle or only changed the driver?**

Only the driver was changed in our bus.

**Could anybody realize why the drivers were changed?**

At that time I did not have any idea. But as for my present calculation; it was to seal information about the final stage from the driver who knew that all those people were brought from Topzawa and of course the new driver wouldn't where all those people brought from. And thus nobody would know our full story.

date palms on the other side. The word water was equal to amnesty, freedom and life. To have some sips of water was the most valuable thing in our live. A relieve was automatically appeared on our faces. But this was a false hope too; the cars diverted to the right and left the water behind. "For our bad luck they have chosen this water as a road mark to find the shooting field" I said to myself.

The view of water was no more than fata morgana of the desert. it was the dream that did not come true.

The temporary roots disappeared too. We arrived to a sandy place. We all thought that that was the slaughterhouse. Sings of death were visible on the faces and Anwar Tayara asked us to forgive each other, regret all our wrong doing in life and read "Shahada" or the confirmation of our belief in God and his Messenger.

We did so although we never new each others before, nor we had ever dealt with each others, and of course there were no wrong doing against the other party. We were just forced into a car, in a coffin and had a journey of death together. Therefore asking for forgiveness was nothing more than an Islamic tradition.

Hands were raised to the sky, for very simple demands such asking for forgiving all our guilt and consider the suffering that we have had in the past two days as enough punishment. We were praying and crying asking our lord for help. But before we finish our prayers the shooting started. Here I heard somebody saying "possibly the shooting is coming from the Shiite oppositions". The Shiite Arabs were suffering the oppression like us, therefore they carried weapon against the regime and attack the governmental forces whenever and wherever they could.

Once more there was hope. We thought that the Kind Lord responded to our prayer. Not everybody among us was so optimistic, some said from where did they know that we are

no more tell the directions. According to his speculation; the field of firing-squads was not far away. We had all come to a conclusion that we will be shot dead. The mien of death of death was clearly shown on every face. We were looking at each others, silently saying good-bye to one another.

Short moments before death were time to think of our families, children, life partners, parents, sisters, brothers and friends. Normally those who are sentenced to death are thinking and regretting of what they have done. But what guilt should we regret for? What wrongs had we executed to deserve death without any trail or even without being informed a day prior to the sentence, and without having a last look at our dears.

Eventually, nothing had remained for us. We were looking at each other others' faces but could not pronounce a single word.

### **How could your friend Anwar guess that you are getting closer to the shooting site?**

As I have already told you that Anwar had worked for a ministry of roads and bridges, in Iraq this type of work called "Ashgal". He turned be having a good experience in recognizing the places we had passed through.

When our journey started he told us that we were on the to the city of Mosel, few hours later he noticed that the root was changed to the western side of Iraq, toward the city of Rumady which is also known as "Anbar".

Due to his experience as a Peshmarga, he realized at once that our life will be ended by firing squad soon we leave the last police station on the road to Rumady when he had just seen special Iraqi forces with a number o f bulldozers. His prediction seemed to be realistic when the paved road finished, the convoy slowed down to take a dusty root.

Our friends became more curious and they tried to see the place through the little window. What they have seen infused life into us once more. They have seen water on one side of the road and

whether the process of the killing was the same in front of every vehicle or bigger number were shot together in the other places and they used their heavy machines to through them down in the pit!

They arranged the vehicles in a way that we all could see the shooting process and to feel more agony for our brothers.

**You said that two young people were taken together to be shot dead in front of their own transporter. Was the process starting by taking out two victims from the car and taking them straight to the edge of the grave?**

The view was so narrow that we could only a small part of the place, but I think they were bringing the whole group down and then they were taking two by two or more for the shooting. What we have seen was two were shot, thrown to the pit followed by another two. Not everything was going in order, as an example some the victims were eye folded some others were not, some were showered by bullets some were hit by single shots and some were shot at head other at knees. Some were too close to the edge and fallen to the pit straight ahead other had to be thrown in by soldiers.

This irregularity looked like that some the headsmen were brought to get trained lively on their Kurdish brothers, or probably some were doing the shooting just for fun and in the end some of the victims were slightly wounded but buried alive. The nonchalance character of some army officers came into our sight when they tried their personal pistols on eye folded people and practiced their hobbies the way the leaders of Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party were practicing.

**In that way, it seemed clear that some were showered with AK 47 Rifle and some other with**

innocent Kurds in these buses and we were brought here to be butchered? Who did know the identity of people packed in windowless buses?

The shooting was continuous outside. Our car had stopped, not to get us down for the shooting but because for some technical reason. The car could not make its way through land! I did not know was it because of mud or san. The engine was roaring, the wheels kept rolling and throwing sand behind body the car did not move. I think a bulldozer was brought to help because we felt some jerks and the car got on the way again; on the way to the slaughterhouse of the human being. The sound of the shooting was getting nearer and nearer.

The vehicle stopped, not because of technical reason but because it reached the end point of the trip. The other cars near us had also stopped but the shooting did not stop. Neither the gunmen from the opposition parties nor the angels of the sky came to rescue us. We could not see yet what was going on but we did not have any doubt that they were killing us, killing the Kurds that had brought from Kurdistan.

**Can you remember the time when you arrived in the place that you described it as the end point?**

It was shortly after the sun set. The engine of our car and the head lights were still on, but the light of the bulldozer that covered the graves were stronger. It was very obvious that the work of the bulldozers coming after the shooting. They perform two functions; firstly throwing the corpses to the pit and secondly covering them with sand of the desert. Here, one should not forget that the mass graves were dug by bulldozers. We could see a part of the tragic drama through the window between us and the driver cabinet. The head light of our car had spotted on some of the sceneries. We saw that they were bringing two victims together and shooting them at the edge of the pit, and then throwing them in the hole. I am not sure

Doing some to save or life or dying with heads up was our decision. But what can horrified men like us do? Our legs were shaking not only because of hypoglycemia but because of strong fear. Nevertheless, Anwar Tayara was a man for difficult days, a man to take a challenge. He addressed us saying: “My dear brothers! We are a group of men able to something. We keep calm and collected until we all get off, and then we attack them all together. What we need is to get a single gun, this may need some scarifies but easier than dying like a folk of animals. We can at least do a work that may keep one of us alive. That person can go back to Kurdistan and tell our nation and the whole world the way they killed us. In case of no survival then our brave challenge will be narrated even by our enemies.”

Anwar moved the spirit of courage and fearlessness in us. We trusted him because we knew him for his courage as a Peshmarga. We simply asked him to go ahead and tell us whatever he wanted. However, another guy who his friend and a Peshmarga fighter changed the plan saying that when the first soldier enters our cabinet he will rush at his gun and the rest of us will topple him down. We all agreed, and we all regained hope to survive. I was personally dreaming to the survivors, and I think the others had the same dream.

**How long did it take from the minute you made your plan and the moment they opened your door?**

When we arrived there, on the first hand they had opened the main door. The guarding soldier had left us but our door was kept locked and his place remained empty. We were waiting for our door to be opened. Apart of being exhausted from the heat and dehydration, we were also desperate to enact our plan. I would like to tell you that waiting in that hell had turned to wait for a victory. It is true that nobody makes hurry to die soon but our death was imminent. They will kill us sooner or later.

**personal pistols, so the view was clear enough to see such details?**

Yes indeed. That was what we have seen in front of the head lights of our vehicle.

**This means that you could see the headsmen and the victims?**

That is right, we have seen them. They were in spotted green uniform (this type of units are called Mugaweer in the Iraqi army) and their faces were covered with a piece black cloth.

**When a man see his brother is slaughtered in front of his eyes; what will be his reaction?**

I was just going to speak about that. My brother was among the detainees. The detainees were all Kurds and our brother-human; it is difficult to describe a feeling of a man who himself will be the next victim within minutes. Our feeling chanced to a challenge; we decide to show a fierce resistance!

**How many hours have you been in that vehicle?**

Twelve to thirteen hours.

**That means a long time of dehydration and starvation. Could you after all resist all those wild headsmen?**

Telling you the truth we were totally exhausted. I was personally half dead. It was difficult for me to move from my seat to the next one. But the situation was unbearable; our people were butchered in a barbarian way. Our man hormone became alerted. We were going to die but why not dying with dignity? Why not collecting the test of our energy and use it in our last moment of life? Our friend Anwar, the old Peshmarga had revived the sense of honor in us.

They came in very carelessly. To my estimation; they did not think that we dare to do anything else.

They came in three. An officer was leading them. He was the first to approach us and the first one to be attacked by Anwar Tayara. The other man was strong too, a fierce fight took place. We rushed to help but the soldier opened fire again. The other friend of Anwar who promised to block the door was shot and fell in the door space, and thus he fulfilled his promise. The fight between Anwar and the officer continued; Anwar was trying to get his gun, we rushed to help him and soldiers hold the other end of the gun. Anwar who got a free hand could hit the officer's face with a strong punch, the man shouted from pain he run away but the devil managed to off the rifle of the gun machine with him.

Once he went out he locked the door behind him. One of the soldiers was locked in with us but I cannot remember whether he was carrying a gun or not. But Anwar had got the officer's one in his hand but he couldn't use it as the officer took it with him anyway.

The second face of the game finished that way. The third one was soon to come. We could not guess how it would be. But we did not wait long before their commander shout at them saying: "shoot them! Kill all of them in the bus. The shooting started like a hell. They did not wait to rescue the other soldier, he was hit with us.

I felt that I was hit in my right eye. I tested it with my finger but thanks God it was not a bullet. I did not know what was it but from the way it was burning my eye I guessed it was a fire ball used to set fire in the bus. The bullets were coming from every the walls of the car turned to a sieve.

My eye was burning and my leg was bleeding. I fell on the floor. The showering continued, many others had fallen on me. They were all bleeding, the bus turned to blood pool. I caught no more bullets because the corpses of my friends were

However the more we stayed in that oven the weaker we became to overcome in our plan.

The separating moments were very strange. They were separating our dear life from the most barbarian methods of finishing it. Naturally we were hesitant between staying alive and dying in secrecy that causes an endless pain for our families. We were simply contented to see what will happen when the first soldier comes in and our friend takes his gun. Should we succeed would the other friends in the other cars do the same?

### **OK, when they opened the door what had happened?**

If you may remember the first plan set by Anwar was to attack them when we get down all together. But Anwar's friend (I think his name was Salam) said that I would better to get the first gun. We were undecided. But we all waited to see the door open and to see if Salam can take the gun or not?

### **Which of the two plans was enacted?**

Well, the wind did not blow the way suits the ship. We were expecting one soldier to come and open the door, but they came in two. The first one opened the door and tried to come in but Salam attacked him like a wounded tiger, he was just about taking his gun but the other soldier was quick enough to shoot our friend and kill him straight away.

The soldiers run outside of the bus. A big noise roused around the bus, we could neither understand them nor guess what their next step will be! The young man Salam fell on the floor motionless, we were simply shocked but our experienced hero did not give up he said this I will attack. Another friend of him said that he will throw himself into the door's opening to prevent them from locking it. The soldier repeated the attempt.



**You did not speak to the other survivor because you wanted to avoid troubles, but how did he too keep quiet without pronouncing a word or even groaning?**

No, he did not give any sign like that. I was sure that the experience we had in that coffin obliged him to be very careful. Keeping quiet was the shortest way to survive.

**The moment you left the car what have you seen?**

The light and darkness.

**What do you mean?**

When one the first hand I left the car, I left terror and dimness behind, and then I have seen the light but also the light of terror that came from the killing machines of the Ba'ath Party. The mass killing was still continuous but far away from me.

**How far was the other killing field?**

Few hundred meters only?

**Remember that you had told me that when you were still safe in the car, you were looking through the little window of the guarding door and had seen under the light of other cars and bulldozers the life process of mass killing, then within few minutes came your turn! So how come they become so far from you, I mean within the matter of minutes?**

Well if you too remember that I spoke about our bus problem when the convoy left the paved road and entered a sandy desert. At that place our car stopped in the sand and needed some minutes to be taken out. This helped us to reach the slaughterhouse a bit late. Therefore, as I think we had got to park at the far side of the field.

protecting me. I wanted to whine because of the severe pain but controlled myself because if made noise the soldiers would have opened more fire. After a little while I heard another person moaning but I did not talk to him because if the wounded person was the soldier he might have told his friends to shoot me!

The troops have left as without checking on us. May be they were sure that we were all dead. But I was still keeping quiet, thanking god silently, and begging him to give enough power and energy to get back safe and sound and to tell the whole world the new fascism killed all those innocent people. I wished to fulfill Anwar's will.

Few minutes later the shooting resumed again but they were killing other groups far away from us. The more I waited the safer I was and the place was becoming more quiet regarding the enemy but my wound was bleeding more. All of sudden I heard some was opening the main door and leaving the car. Yes, somebody was alive and left the vehicle without being shot. I became confident that nobody remained around so I decided to leave the death box.

Yet another difficult task, the lower part of my body was numbing. I had to crawl using my hands, leaving pains and bleeding aside.

**When you left the vehicle did you feel that were still people alive in the car?**

When the shooting stopped I thought that nobody was left alive but some could leave the before I dare to do that. I was encouraged by and started removing the corpses that worked as bullet prove of my life, and made my way out. Of course my thigh was numbing and bleeding but I had managed to crawl toward the door and leave the hell to uncertain paradise, the most dangerous paradise in the world.

the massacre and the mass graves. For such a long journey good pair of shoes and healthy feet is needed. I did not have any of them; my leg was bleeding and my old torn shoes were torn and filled with blood.

I preferred to take the long way without shoes because they became slippery, and because I wanted to avoid the splashing sound of my feet in those little pools of blood. When I threw away my shoes I had to face another problem! There were small green thorny plants in that desert which hurt my bare feet but I did care about it. I had to hurry up and get away from the headsmen. Indeed I made a good distance but still the sounds of bullets were deafening.

I was very determined to make my journey to the safety. But the dehydration caused lack of drinking water and loosing blood was paralyzing a camel of the desert. I decided to have a rest. I sat down and made a little test to myself; my mouth was totally dry, my lungs were aching and making a strange sound during the breathing. The whoop was too loud for secretive journey but I had to bear everything and every challenge to achieve the last will of Anwar Tayara.

Fresh air was a gift from God that we had all missed in the car but now I am enjoying it with asking anybody to open a window for me. I raised my hands to the sky asking our lord to give strength and will to make my journey back to my beautiful homeland, to Kurdistan. I prayed and begged to get an opportunity to kiss my children once more in my life. Thinking of my children was the taste of thinking of the survival but I also fear the shocking news of being anfaled.

Somehow, there was a glimpse of hope tickling my mind and making me sure that my children were still alive. Was it the father's feeling? I don't know but this dream was fueling my efforts to take the most difficult challenge of my life. Physically I was in the Arabia Desert but my soul was in Kurdistan, remembering my childhood, my playgrounds the working

The killing of the other detainees in our front started a bit earlier. They have finished one line of car before turning to us. The killing process went in a different way with our group. The time between the first shooting, the one we have seen it from the window and the moment I crawled out from our car took relatively a long time. I mean the National Soldiers of Iraq had finished their task. And thus when I came out; the buses and the headsmen were no more there. Perhaps they were gone to shower others.

I could see from the far sides of the killing field other actions and other line of buses and bulldozers. The movement of buses for bringing new groups was often shedding light on me; therefore I had to be very careful not to be seen and shot again, especially the area was flat and detecting the moving bodies was easy. All that and when I was getting to safer places I was trying to have a better view.

Bulldozers were roaring, bullets were resounding to find their way into the flesh of whom they used to call our (Kurdish Brothers) to put them under the holly soil of the united country, the united Iraq; the country of Arabs and Kurds.

**You could leave the car. You hoped to reach safety. Did you think you could find the right direction?**

No, not at all, I did not where to go or which direction. All I wanted to leave the car and the slaughterhouse. The roaring of the bulldozers, the lights of the transporters and the resounds of the hail of bullets were things to avoid and thus I have to avoid keep away from two places; the first one was the shooting fields and the second one was the pit where the victims were thrown. Thus, I did not have a good chance to find the safe way. Besides, I did not know where I was and where to go or how long could I crawl? The only thing that I was sure was about, was the big distance between where I was and any inhabited place in that area. I realized that because a desert was chosen for

to perform that role and keep safe from streams of automatic gun shots. Honestly without any survivors nobody could discover the story of the mass killing.

The possibility of discovering the mass graves is understandable but who could tell the full story from A to Z? Who would tell the way we were packed in Topzawa halls without food and water, the way we were kept in portable coffins from Kirkuk to the heart of the desert and the systematic way they killed all those productive youth of our nation?

These facts that I discussed with myself planted a certain power in me. I have got a kind of faith that I will overcome all the challenges and I will tell the message to the history. So many times I raised my hands to do my prayer but once I could concentrate on the beauty of the sky, the lovely stars were shining wonderfully. The sky was the same one I have seen over Kurdistan. I knew many stars by name. I felt that I am in the sky living with all those friendly stars. But Saddam's devils were bringing me down to the hell of shooting and killing.

I got up from my dreams to live in reality, in stepping towards achieving Anwar's will. I felt stronger I did not know was it because of the good rest or the Lord gave extra power. Eventually I had to choose the right way. There were two sources of lights that I could see one of them was coming from where the people were living, the other one was from where my friends were slaughtered. Naturally I chose the life and left the death behind. There was a village or a town in that area. But because the lights were weak, I realized that that inhabited place was far away.

Lights at night are good guide to follow. I started the march toward them without knowing what the place was! Was it a military barracks or Bedouins tents? Was it a police station or civil residences? Nevertheless I started getting closer and hearing dogs' barks. This was good news for me because dogs are often guarding civilians. I had to think about dealing with

places, the family ties, the memories of getting married and making children. All these nice dreams were titillating my heart, but soon the bitterness of the oppression was disturbing my mind.

By no mean I was sure about the life of any member of my family. It was just several hours ago when I was separated from my dear brother in the concentration camp of Topzawa. He was in the hall where detainees prepared to be killed. Most probably some the bullets which were fired at that moment were piercing his flesh and bones. Nevertheless, the bullets were all directed to kill innocent young people from my homeland.

I was very short of breath. I did not know what had happened to breast. I was not afraid of injuries or diseases, I was worried only about the noise my chest was producing and was trying to stop it to put my hand on my nose and mouth or by reducing the movement of my chest. However, after having a good rest the problem had ended and got a free mind to think about my survival and continued to pray for the rest of my family. My mind was immersed in a metaphysical moments, I found myself surrounded with my mother, sisters, brothers, my wife and children. This feeling made me rather optimistic to find them alive. But how do I deceive myself while my brother was thrown with me in the convoy of death?

It is bless of god to be optimistic! I did not exclude the chance of my brother's survival by a similar attempt like ours. And it was not excluded to meet him around and to arrange for the returning trip to Kurdistan together.

I remained in the resting position for about half an hour. Nothing disturbed my rest a part of hail of shooting between times to time. The shooting was disturbing my lovely dreams to feel the pain for all those unjustified killing. "But at least I am going to survive and going to tell the truth, the story of the mass killing in the desert to my people and the whole world." I said to myself. I thanked God over and over again for choosing me

having a close look I had got to know that I found what I was looking for.

What I found was a very small village of three or four hoes. They were what we call it (single or isolated houses). I had to choose one of them, but I was hesitating to knock any of their doors. I raised my hand once more to the sky and asked God to help. I knocked a door. A very young girl about fifteen opened it. She had a very close look at me; she saw my bare feet my torn clothes stained with blood. Instead of being terrified or reluctant she welcomed me in Arabic and in a very polite manner and asked me to enter their house! “God sent me an angle from the sky” I said to myself.

**How was your reaction when she asked you to enter a house that you have never been to before, did you step in or waited for somebody to come to you and see what you were after?**

No I wasted no time whatsoever I followed the young girl. I was not asked not ask what I was after and I did not bother to explain. We first entered a yard. She closed the gate and asked me to follow her. She opened another door; the door of mercy. Mercy in the middle of a vast desert, in the middle of headsmen barracks.

The girl asked me to enter an open room. What a surprise! A big family was waiting for a guest. But what a strange guest! A guest who shocked everybody in the house! They have never expected to a have a strange guest like me in the mid night, stepping into their living room. Without any hesitation I joined them. They all stood up. I greeted them and the replied me in a very friendly way.

First of all I was given a glass of water. I drunk it and I felt that there was still life in me. An elderly man who looked like their father asked the women to move to another room. Then he asked me if I was hungry. I told him that I have not seen or

the dogs. The blood on my closes was enough to drive them crazy, so I started crawling and rolling my body in the sand. The dust served me in reducing the amount and the smell of blood.

Here, I realized that my injured thigh was still bleeding and the sand could not help much to deceive the dogs. What would I do? I had no choice but to try the dogs. Try the dogs to which creatures are crueller men or dogs?

I went ahead and saying to myself that as far as I escaped hails of shooting I must deal with dogs without fear, the Lord in the sky will protect me once more.

But just before approaching the lights I got a big shock! I found the place was a military barracks!

**How did you know that the place was a barracks?**

From the fence

**Did you see anybody in military uniform our any other military sign to make sure that it was a military place?**

No, honestly I did not see any soldiers but under the light of the lamps I saw the whole place was surrounded with fences.

**When you became sure that it was a military barracks what was your next decision?**

That was a total disappointment. After cutting a long way with so many difficulties I reached a place full of headsmen. I had to hide out. My greatest hope to get a glass of water had dashed away. But once more I prayed to God, who is everywhere, to help me there too.

I wanted to get away from the devils. I walked parallel to the fence to avoid losing my way or entering the barracks from a gate or a door without seeing them. Within minutes I saw some other chains of electrical lamps and approached them. By

they were not nice people they wouldn't care that much. The hope of survival had become stronger.

One of their sons was a soldier I was shocked once I saw him entering the house. I thought that he came to arrest me but the father was clever enough to read my face and assuring me saying that he was his son and was serving in the army. He added that he was there because he sent after him to come. His son's military unit was in the near-by area. Probably in the barracks that avoided to get closer to them the night before. The young man seemed enthusiastic to take part in treating my wounds.

He too had a friendly chat with me. I replied all his questions in my broken Arabic. He showed a great sympathy and his readiness to help me the he could. He asked me to trust in God and left.

**When he left the house what did you feel? Did you think of the fact that the guy was a soldier and he might fulfill his duty by working on your arrest?**

Telling you the truth I had thought about that fact too. I knew that they were very kind people but the regime was a kind of oppressor that knew no mercy; would the regime intelligence department know that they hiding somebody like me they would have killed all of them. There was nothing excluded in my calculations. But there was yet another surprise for me; the soldier came in right time with a nurse and asked her to medicate all my wounds!

**For how long did the soldier disappear?**

For a short time, about thirty minutes. I think there was a medical centre in the area

**Were you afraid that the nurse may inform the authorities?**

tasted any food for the last two days. He asked his family to bring me food and tea and told me to wash and clean my face and my hands. They showed me a bucket of water in the yard and I carefully cleaned whatever my hands could reach.

Shortly after that the food was ready. Once I finished the elderly asked about what had happened to me. In the beginning, I mean when I entered the house I was afraid to tell my story to that gig crowd in the house especially the women may tell the story to their neighbors and the secret police may detect me. Therefore I thought about fabricating a false story but I soon changed my mind particularly when they appeared so kind and cooperative. Were they bad people they would not served me so gently, therefore I told them the full story from the point the demolished our houses and villages and then how they gathered us at gun point. I explained to how they massacred my sisters, brothers, mother, my wife and our children. I spoke about my personal experiment and how I became the only survival of the fire squad somewhere near their house.

A great compassion was drowning on their faces. I found them very responsive when I told them that I need them for I have nobody else in this world, and that is why I knocked their door. The land word took me to another room and with a help of a lady the cured all my wounds and removed the dry blood stains and told to go sleep and not warring about my wounds as they were all superficial.

With confidence and tranquility I went to bed and slept until late in the morning. I slept very well, waked up late in the morning. I cannot tell how many hours did I sleep because I don't the time I had entered that house but I guess it was not too late as everybody was still awake.

When I walked up I found a big breakfast waiting for me. They asked me to eat lamb liver to compensate the blood that I had lost. To me, this was another step to feel tranquil, because it

I wanted to stand up to welcome the man, but my wounds did not let me. All what I could do was to change my lying position and sit down. Ameen was a bit confused to find in that place. I realized that the Arabic couple had to put him in better picture. The man started speaking with me, asking me how on earth an injured Kurdish is a guest of an Arab family and getting such good care!

The man was very curious to what happened to me and what brought me here! I told him the full story. I could see the reaction on his face he was very scared. He knew that the regime will shoot all of them if they discover and anfaled person provided a safe refuge here. The explained the full story. The same story that I wanted to tell them last night, but it seemed by Arabic was not good enough to make them how serious my story was! The same confusion was drawn on the hosts' faces. Probably they were moved by the disastrous fate of my wife and children.

The discontent and fear seemed clear on their faces. I wouldn't blame them because I am personally the victim of the regime's tyranny. Well they hosted and treated me and now the most important point is to keep the secrecy of the whole incident until I leave this house. I had noticed the mother left us and talked to her daughters in a separate room. I could read the same amount of fear was drawn one every face.

I did not blame myself for my poor Arabic language; "Things are relative" I said to myself. A fluent Arabic language might have left no room for their hospitality. In the end we had got a common concern; how to take me to the safety and to keep away from the policemen of the regime.

**At the time when you had seen discontent and fear drawn on the faces what was your reaction?**

Honestly I could understand them. The situation was very frightening. Imagine that you put your life and the lives of all

Not really. I was sure that none of them will give any information to anybody. I was sure that the family wanted to help me in the best way but I was still not sure to tell the nurse what had happened to me should she asked me some question. I decided not to answer her by pretending not to understand Arabic. Thanks god she did not ask any questions. I was sure that the good soldier did a good job.

**Do you want to say she did not ask any professional questions either?**

Actually she did not any questions. I think she was a family's friend and that she was told everything before starting the treatment. Whatever the case was friend or not a friend; she was told a certain story and was persuaded to come for a swift cure. She cleaned all the wounds and treated them without saying a word and left.

Later on the house lady told me that there are some Kurdish families in the neighborhood and that one of them is a very good family friend and asked about my opinion to call them in to talk with each other. There was a kind of misunderstanding going on. Probably the reason was my poor Arabic language. I understood everything but could not make them understand everything very clearly. As if I had created doubt about the presence of Kurdish families around, therefore the women confirmed that there are several families from Kurdistan and that Ameen's family is their closest family friend.

I was very delighted to meet some of my people in that desert. Once again I put it in a way that the Lord had made everything available for my survival, and even if I would not survive then I can tell my people what my story was. Eventually I could make them understand that I was willing to meet them. They had sent a young son of the family after them. We did not wait long the boy came back with a man in the Kurdish traditional dress.

story and the reason why he could not take me back home and this is his story:

“The Iraqi army occupied there village, and all the families in military Lorries and brought the settlements in the desert of Rumady (in the where I met him). They were allowed to travel around and look foe works but just a month before the date of our meeting lot of movement restrictions were imposed upon them including limitations of only few kilometers to travel around for a very limited time. Provided that the person must get a written permission that stated the place to go the time of leaving and coming back, the persons accompanying him and the reason why he is leaving his settlement unit.” Thus man could not travel as far as I wanted him to come with and could not get an official permission for me from the police station.

Their situation was very difficult, and as for me was rather disappointing. The man left us by asking me to be patient and stay where I was for few more days until my total recovery.

“Don’t worry; this place is safe” was his last words.

I was left for my thoughts, thinking about a plan to leave this place. Many ideas had struck my mind but also many obstacles were on the way. Wandering in any place was controlled by military police, besides my dressed wounds were bringing attention. I knew it was not easy to make my way home but I had never lost hope to be gathered again with my wife and children.

Thus my time was passing between dreams and hopelessness. On the first hand I was in a disposition situation and of no experiences, and on the second hand I could not stop dreaming of going back to the place I belonged.

Staying in the place where I was or leaving it was not my decision alone. I did not have one penny to spend on myself and my Arabic standard was very poor and over all I did know where I was.

your family members at risk. My feeling was; did the life of a single person was worth to make others sacrifice for it? I preferred my death than putting that kind family at risk Saddam Hussein’s punishment. In some cases the death is considered a happy end. Here, I had to think seriously not put the whole family’s life at risk. The Anfal operations will include my hosts, the kind nurse and the Kurdish man Ameen. It is true that I prayed for my survival and my return to my homeland but never on the expense of a dozen of innocent people.

To keep none aliened or not playing the role of the secret police of the regime may means death penalty. Thus I could concentrate only on one plan, only to leave this place as soon as possible. From this point of I put up a question to Ameen if he could help by taking me to the nearest town of Kurdistan, to Tuzkhurmatu? His answer was negative but he said that he could have done that one month earlier!

#### **What did the Kurdish man mean when he said that he could do that a month earlier?**

That aroused the same question with me. I was rather disappointed by his answer. Indeed when the house wife told me that there were Kurdish families around them I was very delighted and thought the survival way was knocking the door. But the man disappointed me. I did not know what to do. The Kurdish man had put the host family in doubt and now he says that it is not possible to take me back. My feeling was the chance of survival was narrowing. The presence of the Kurdish man had turned over the whole thing. My personal explanation was that because of my poor language knowledge I could not make the family realize the risky situation but Ameen could do that.

I didn’t have any other choice but to beg the Kurdish to make his mind to help me. But when he explained his own state of affairs I realized that he was right. The man told me his own

sat down between him and his father. In the beginning I thought only the son will come with me, and that the father told that he was sending me with his son to Baghdad, but he when he entered the car I blamed my poor Arabic. Thanks to their neighbor Ameen; without him the misunderstanding would have continued and this quick arrangement would not happened. The presence of the old man made me feel more assured.

**How was the driver dressed?**

He was in his military uniform. But I could not realize whether he was an army soldier or a public-army militia man. But surely his unit was near his home.

**Did you ask them what the name of the place was?**

No. I did not ask because the place was too small and there were only three houses.

**At what time did your journey start?**

I don't know the exact time but it was late in the afternoon.

**How far was the distance between that place and Baghdad, how long did it take by car?**

I do not know that because they put me in another car when we reached the city of Rumady.

**Could you realize why did that change happen, did anything happen on the way?**

No, nothing had happened. I think they planned it that way from the beginning. They took me by their own car till Baghdad's terminal and there we found a white private car of five passengers was waiting for us. There were three army captains sitting in the car and as soon as, the son and I got on; the car moved toward Baghdad. And the father back to his village.

Next day in the morning the same Kurdish man Ameen turned up and started a serious conversation with the elderly man. Their son, the soldier was coming and going; this signaled that they were planning something for my journey home. The family was expecting a dangerous consequences of being caught hiding a Kurdish man like me. They were under pressure of finding a very quick solution. Their fear was very beneficial for me; they wanted to get rid of a troublesome guest like me. However, they were kind, polite and helpful.

Strange is this life; two days ago troops of Arab gunmen had put me in a coffin and took me for a fire-squad without telling me what my guilt was but today a big Arabic family is trying their best for my survival and cleaning the physical and psychological wounds the soldiers made left on me.

It was only late in the afternoon, and I was still praying for my survival when the soldier and his father came to me carrying Arabic dresses for me. They asked to put of my Kurdish clothes and to get dressed like an Arab man. I had put on a long dizdash with a red head cover and a pair of slippers.

With no hesitation I did what they wanted. I took out my identity card from inner wears because I hid it when we were in the big hall of Topzawa. When I was ready, the father gave me five Iraqi Dinars telling me that this money is needed for the taxi fee from Baghdad to Kirkuk. This meant we go to Baghdad his son's private car. The car was waiting for us outside and the whole family was there to wish me a safe journey.

**What was the type of the car?**

It was a white a single-cabinet picks up car.

**Was the man's son driving the car or he had just accompanied you? Were they the owner of the car?**

I believe that the belonged to their son because during the past two days he was using it. The son was drove the car and I



Quite easy. In my certificate my date of birth is written, and thus it was clear that I should have serving in the army and carrying a military identity card which I was not in posses of it.

**And when you were by the check point did you show them your nationality card?**

As a matter of fact they never stopped our car and nobody dared to come near it. Our car was only slowing down and the military police were performing the military salute and letting the car passing through.

The same procedure had repeated in every check point until we arrived in Baghdad. Telling you the truth I was frightened in the beginning but in the end I felt like a big officer in Arabic dress! What a difference! The military men who took me from Kadir Karam to the desert were all headsmen but those kind officers were gentlemen, doing exactly the opposite; they were saving my life.

I was so contented with them I wished I could continue the journey with them till Kirkuk.

**When did you arrive in Baghdad?**

I don't the exact time but it was night. It seemed that they planned the journey to reach the capital at night. They stopped in a place where lots of taxis waiting. They asked me to get off take a taxi to Nahza Garage.

I got off, thanked them for their favor and took a taxi to Nahza. I felt lonely and no more protected by a group of officers. I was in Arabic dress with broken Arabic and carrying five dinars.

**Have you been to Baghdad before?**

Yes, I have been there before.

From the way they treated each other I understood that they were relatives and that made my journey safer. In Iraq military police cannot check cars of high ranking army officers. I think the villager old man asked his relatives to take me their private car and to wear the military uniform.

**You thought that they were relatives. Did they use terms like uncle or cousin to address each others?**

No, not from such terms. I realized that because they were waiting for us in the bus terminal and treating the young soldier like a very close person. Nothing seemed to be coincidence. They spent their time joking with each others.

**Did the army officers in the car ask you any questions?**

Only when I got in their car they welcomed me. We did not have any conversations until we arrived in Baghdad.

**Were there military check points on the high way between Rumady and Baghdad?**

Yes of course, there were three or four military check points. I was scared to death when we reached the first one. I thought that they would ask for my ID card because I was the only civilian in the car.

**You said that you were carrying your nationality certificate. What was wrong with it? What were you afraid of?**

Well I was a deserted soldier. My year birth group-year was called to join the army but I did not.

**Well then, it was not written in your national certificate that you deserted the army. Wherefrom could they realize that you are a deserted soldier?**

No, he came alone to us, but there were a group of security policemen around the bus. They were working as a team, besides there were a number of gun men wandering around.

**How many people were detained with you in that garage?**

More or less we were about twelve detainees. We were all of the same categories; I mean our military stand was not legal. However, there were soldiers who wanted to spend the week-end with their families but they had not got permission.

**What had happened to you then?**

They put us in a military car and took us to a place in the capital. One of the soldiers was familiar with the place and said this "Harthia." That military center was used for recruiting soldiers

**So you were once more detained. That was what you feared most after your big escape. How was your expectation then?**

I was very scared when they got me in the bus. I thought they will realize that I am wanted to be shot dead in the desert. Somehow I was lucky that nobody had questioned me at spot otherwise I might have told them everything. But in Harthia I found myself among a multi nationals group, some of them were Kurds like me but all the cases were of recruiting nature so my fear was relieved a bit.

**What was particular about the Kurds who were gathered there? Did you have any idea?**

Nothing was special about them. Although there were different categories such as; students, drivers and mercenaries but they were all due to be sent to their military enlistment centers of their districts. Such procedures were called "Tasfirat"

**Did you have a family friend in the capital? Were you acquainted with anybody there who might be of help to continue your journey?**

No, I did not have any friends whatsoever. In the mean time I could not search for any family or any friend, because I had never stayed that long to be familiar with the city.

**There were often searching military our security groups searching for deserted soldiers and other wanted people, did you see any of them around?**

No, I did not meet or see any of them but I was very scared. I thought that I was watched by everybody in the town. My state of optimism came to an end and started doubting about everybody looking at me. I was thinking to claim to be a blue collar labor working in Arabic cities that is why I was in Dizdash.

The taxi driver told me to get off, he pointed to the garage. I found Kirkuk's platform and got into a Coaster bus which was designed for 21 passengers. I was sitting in the bus and was shouting loudly; Kirkuk...Kirkuk! The bus was half full. There are many soldier in the bus, they were passengers too. The bus did not move until the seats were full. The bus was full but a security police man came in not the driver. He came to check the identities of the passengers and see their military status. He asked us all to show our ID cards!

I was shocked. I knew he will ask for military service card once he knew my year of birth! So I wanted to make an excuse and leave the bus but he told me to show him my papers before I get off. I showed him my nationality card. He put me and those who did not have correct military documents under arrest. He showed us a place to wait. There was a crowd of young people who were caught in the garage.

**Was the man alone?**

was the tragic fate of thousand of Kurdish youth who were systematically killed in the deserts and thrown into mass graves without being publicized. I have met some Arabs and Kurds but none of them knew about the horrifying massacre that I have just escaped.

**You met several Kurdish prisoners in several places and naturally you had opportunities to chat together. Did you ask each other the reason why you were detained? Did you tell anybody the story of mass killing that you have witnessed?**

No, I have never told the story of mass killing or mass graves. All I told them was, I was a poor labour looking for a working place. I did not exclude the chance the intelligence department had discovered where I was and how did I come to Baghdad and that they are searching for me in everywhere.

**You were detained in Harthia and in Tasfirat; were questioned about anything that you were afraid of?**

No, the often look at your dossier and ask questions accordingly. In my case I was a deserted soldier but not a criminal. Their measures were all about returning me to the army but starting from the recruiting center where our village belong. Therefore, they send me as a prisoner from Tasfirat to the military police unit of Kirkuk (the city that I planned seriously to return to). Among the detainees I knew a guy called Dilman he was from Omersofi not very far from our village. He narrated his story telling me that he was looking after his cattle. The soldiers came and stole all of them and detained me to prevent from appealing to get them back. He too, was not aware about what had happened to the people of Garmian district. Just like me, he was totally isolated and knew nothing about the outside world since he was detained. There in the

Those who were already recruited soldiers had to be sent back immediately to their units. The third category that was brought by mistake was released.

I myself was kept for three days in a military hall, it similar to that of Topzawa concentration camp. They did not provide any food or drink. There was a shop to pay and get what you wanted. I was not in posses of money; all I had was few dinars to pay the transport fee to Kirkuk.

I was once more tortured both psychologically and physically; I did not have money to buy food so I had to eat the left-out food from others and between time to time somebody was coming with a whip and lashing us for no reason.

The hall was reminding me with coffin car. We were not allowed to use water circles. We had to pass our thing on the floor and then using big pieces of sponge to wipe the floor and throw the thing in a barrel. The stinky smell was worse than a pig-stable. There in Harthia I knew that there are places worse than Topzawa. "What a life is this?" I asked myself. Wherever you go you find yourself humiliated, no dignity and no human rights. I was regretful for not calling the headsmen by the mass grave to tell them; here I am alive please come and shoot me! For the past three days my dreams were to find the way home and finally I was in the right car but a single man came and forced a dozen of young people to the filthiest place on earth. I started not caring much about my life. The longer you stay alive the more humiliations you face. The Harthia jail was not better than the coffin car.

O God! What was my wrong doing to face all these punishments?

Three long days passed, and then I was taken to Tasfirat department. There I was detained for one month. There too, if you did not pay you could not eat. I had no money on me. What I could was watching who is finishing soon and leaving some food then rushing to snap it. One thing more I concerned about

**You have been shown prisons of Iraq for more than one month; during that relatively long period and remarkable number of Kurdish people you have met could you or could you not send a message to your family to come help you and take out from the detentions?**

It was more than a month. I spent 45 days in several Iraqi detention centers. During that period I tried my best to do so. Whomever I had met from our area I asked them about the situation of our people but none of them knew what was happening so how could I find somebody to be particularly familiar with my family and had known their where about?

Dilman was the only person with whom I acquainted before and with him I spent most of my days in prison. Dilman, just like me, did not know anything about his family and we could not help each other at all. But once the luck struck both of us; when they send us to Tuzkhurmatu for the second time we met the same officer who noticed that we are still hand cuffed and unshaved and felt sorry for us. He opened the cuffs and decided to recruit us as a soldier in Jawal Mansur. He asked us to bring somebody to sponsor us and let us go without military escort.

Fortunately we had lot of friends in Tuzkhurmatu; one of them was called Mullah Mustafa who was living in that town. We sent after him and he came. He was willing to be our bailman. The officer prepared the formal papers, the Mullah signed them and we were free!

Once we left the detention center, the Mullah gave the most valuable gift in the world. He just told me; come and see your mother and the whole family; they are all safe and waiting for you! O God I could not believe myself! I went crazy, I wanted to shout and dance in the street. I felt that I was losing control of myself I did not know how to breath even!

“They are all very well and missing you” added Mustafa. My heart was just about to stop when he they were all safe

detention centre I worked hard to what had happened to our family but nobody knew anything about them.

How strange is the rotation of the time! Few days ago I was packed in Topzawa camp to be taken to the desert to be killed by Iraqi soldiers and now jailed to be recruited as a soldier in the same criminal army to fight against our people or joining the unjustified war to kill Iranians.

However, after three days of imprisonment we were sent to Tuzkhurmatu, because, as they said, we were belonged to that recruitment center.

We were kept as prisoner in Tuzkhurmatu for ten days. Then we were transferred to Tikrit city with our hands cuffed like war criminals. All these sufferings and transferring us between cities, towns and jails without telling us one word.

So many times I wished I could have been recruited like a regular soldier, no matter where or what to do, but for getting few days off and look for my children. The Tikrit prison was a short one, it lasted only two days but from there back to the first square; to Harthia! But we were luck once in our life; they kept us for only one night there and took us to the city of Hilla.

In Hilla we were not dealt with saying that center receives only the soldiers who join in the very first days, therefore we, a group of 200 people, sent back to Harthia! Would God I had died in the desert! Was it not better to be killed once and not hundred times? I am alive not dead but I cannot get any news about my family or be with them for even one second. To cut it short the journey to Kirkuk and Tuzkhurmatu was once more repeated

The suffering continued but I was sure of one thing. I was not accused of escaping the death campaign of the desert. All was happening did not exceed becoming a member of a criminal army, and I had to accept that even if I did not like it.

I had to join the army in Jawal Mansur military barracks and to deliver the officer's papers but I preferred not to do that and remain in hidden.

**And you did not worry about your bailsman Mull Mustafa when you decided not to join the army?**

O yes I did worried about him. But all my relatives and friends were urging me to stay away from the army and other similar governmental establishment. They advised me to hide somewhere without being seen by anybody, they said because of the chaotic situation and the big number of daily recruiting soldiers they cannot check on everybody and you will be forgotten.

They said that the government is not in the posses of unseen knowledge and they can never detect person by person if you don't show up by yourself. Therefore my relatives took me to a safer place in the city of Sulemanya. I was put up there for four months until Baghdad had issued another amnesty. Then I resumed the same long and chaotic paper works to be recruited as a soldier.

As the Iraq- Iran war stopped there was no need to such a big numbers of soldiers and once more I went in hiding and not serving in the army. I remained working to spend on my family until the up rise of the Iraqi people in 1991.

**From the day you were set free until the up rise of 1991 makes a long period of time; did you or did you not inform your wife and family about what had happened to in the desert?**

God knows that I never told my story to anybody neither to my mother nor to the rest of my family. And I did not let anybody know about the story of my wound which still exists on my body.

because that meant my brother Habib was among them! That meant miracle to me because he was detained with our group and we were only separated in Topzawa concentrations camp. I could not tell that story to Mullah Mustafa but just asked him if Habib was among them! He said in his answer that he was all right and will spend some times in prison and will join us soon. The prayed for his release and I said enshallah or by God's Will.

My bailsman took us to another relative's house. My family was living there without knowing that I was in Tuzkhurmatu's prison. Once we entered that house my mother was in the yard. She was just about to faint when she saw me. She was eager to see her both sons safe and back to her family. It was a great surprise to see me entering the house after about two months of disappearance. All that my mother had known was we were taken by the Iraqi army. She was not aware of the experiences that I had passed through in the last two months.

However the happiness was not complete; some my children and my brother's wife were with my mother and when I asked about my wife and the other child she said that because we are a big family we had to be divided to two parts, and that the other part (my wife and the child) lives in Kirkuk at present. My mum asked me not to worry as things will be all right soon.

I insisted to know the right news about my wife's well being and where about but my mother assured me that they were all right. And as for her part, she was eager to know the right news about my brother Habib. I want to hide the truth and swear that he was ok and will come back soon.

I stayed three days with my mother and then travelled to Kirkuk to find my wife and the child living with my aunty. They were in a good health but in general everybody there was suffering of uncertainty and the economic hardship.

dear members of their families were still alive and I did not want to disappoint them. Among them there were elderly fathers and mothers whose last hope were to see their sons or daughters once again in their lives. Therefore I did not want to kill their hopes or to cause them more pains.

**When Saddam Hussein's army reoccupied Kurdistan, where did go with your family?**

We, like many others, left Chamchamal to Iran, and when we came back to Kurdistan we settled down in Hewraman around 80 kilometers east of Sulemanya but we did not stay long then we moved to Halabja and stayed there until 1992. During that year we were interviewed by the United Nations' Organization. They moved us to another town called Saidsadik and put us up in special small houses and lived there for two years until new accommodations were built for in a place called Banjan.

Once in 1996, more we became under the threat of the Iraqi army attacks and forced to move to Iran but we could come back in the same year. But this time we settled down in an old security castle used to torture Kurds by Saddam Hussein's regime men. Fortunately, on 12<sup>th</sup> December 1996 we were taken to Turkey on the way to the United States by the help of the UN organizations who met us four years ago.

Those who had worked with the American organizations were allowed to work and live in the USA. We were all grouped together and settled down in the State of Virginia.

**Did you work before with the Americans?**

No never. I was within the group of the people who were interviewed by the Middle East Watch when we were I Halabja. They came to see the survivors of the mass graves and were told to go for day to Sulemanya. We waited and waited and eventually they came back in four years time and found us

**But when the time came to ask you how did you survive what was your answer?**

When we separated in the plain of Kadir Karam and send the family to the town of Kadir Karam; no communication whatsoever remained between us. My family did not know how my brother Habib and I were separated, met again in Aliawa and separated once more in the concentration camp of Topzawa. Therefore I kept the secrecy of all those information that concern my brother, my survival and the second detention in Baghdad. Time passed and my mother kept saying "My son Habib is also taken as a soldier and he too will one day come back to me." And I had never interrupted her dreams.

**When did you tell your true story to your family?**

After the Eruption of the Iraqi National Revolution in 1991, when Kirkuk city was liberated and the displaced people wanted to return home, I thought that the time was right to tell my family everything that happened. I had chosen that time because the majority of our nation thought their dear detainees are jailed in Topzawa and similar detention centers such as Nugra Salman.

What had confused people was the release a small number of families from some remote Iraqi prisons. These falsified steps made people think that the others will come back sooner or later. To me it was the right time to tell what had happened to tens of thousands of people. However, I could only tell the story to close families and friends.

**You said you did not want to speak about your tragedy publicly; why was that?**

I decided to do so for two reasons; firstly because the up rise did not last long and Saddam Hussein could gather a big army and occupy most of the liberated Kurdish cities and towns. And secondly because many people were living on a hope that their

**Well if you are asked now to describe Anfal operations, what do you say?**

I think if you search the whole terminologies of the world and try to apply whatever terms available, we cannot find an exact definition of Anfal.

However there is a good method you can follow to identify this genocidal crime; the method is to inform the whole world about what had happened to this defenseless nation by the criminals of the overthrown regime of Saddam Hussein

**If you are asked to visit the place where you were you and your people exposed to fire-squad will you agree?**

I am never willing to see such places again. Never again in my life. Not even in my dreams. But I wish if the government of Kurdistan starts bringing back the remains of the victims to our homeland. In that case I am willing to cooperate.

**Would you like me to publish your story or you like to postpone it to some other time?**

Well I would like to see it published right now. The epoch of fear and intimidation is over, now we can express ourselves, we can tell the international community and the whole world what had happened to this peace loving nation.

I would like to my story published in English Language to be read all over the world.

through the foreign office of the PUK and the journey was arranged

I was with other survivors. Their names are; Uzer, Ramadan and Taimur. Later on we were joined by Faraj as well. It is worth to mention that organizers who met us in 1992 in Kurdistan were waiting for us in the Kurdish town of Sloppy of Turkey. They put everything in a formal way and arranged our travelling to the USA.

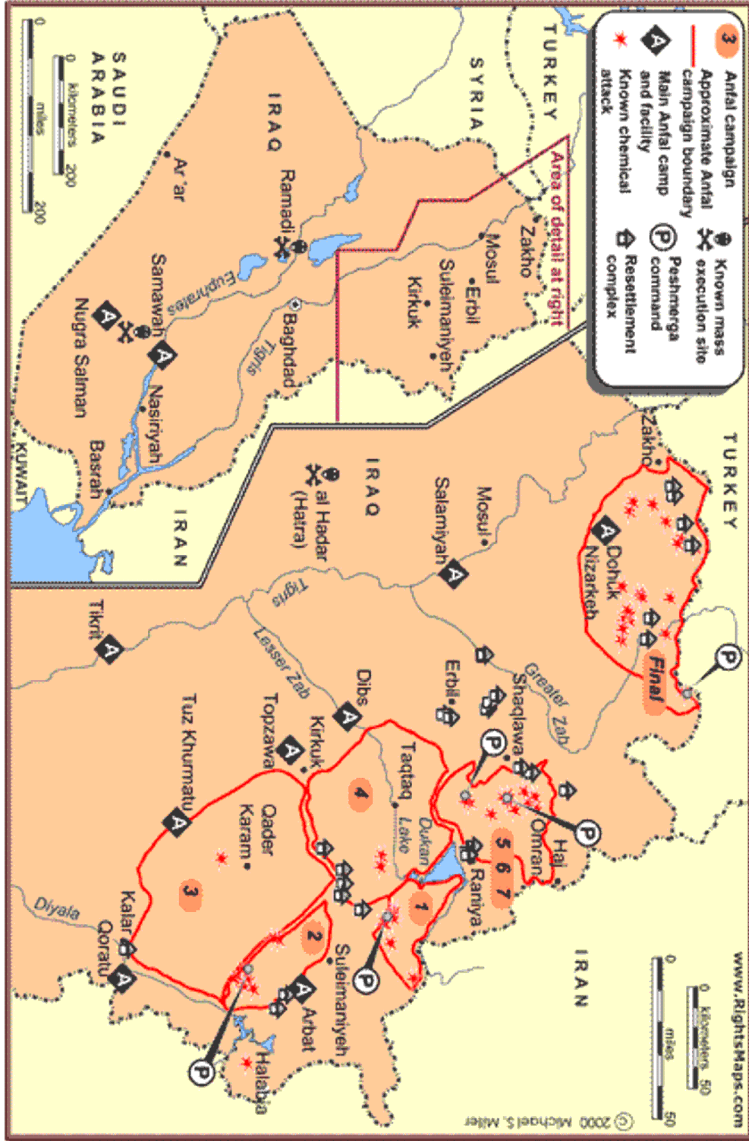
We, the mass grave survivors are grouped together in Virginia. We are good friends and granted opportunities to come back to Iraq and give our statements to the Iraqi Supreme Criminal Court and played the role of the eye-witness in Baghdad.

**When you entered the hall of the Supreme Criminal Court as a witness to testify over Anfal crimes and stood face to face with Saddam Hussein and his criminal comrades, how was your feeling?**

O yes, when I entered the hall of the court and saw Saddam Hussein standing in a dock I wanted to give cry exultation! Unbelievable a big criminal of our history is in a small bar with handcuffs!! Hurray for the justice. In the end the God's will is apparent and oppression comes to an end.

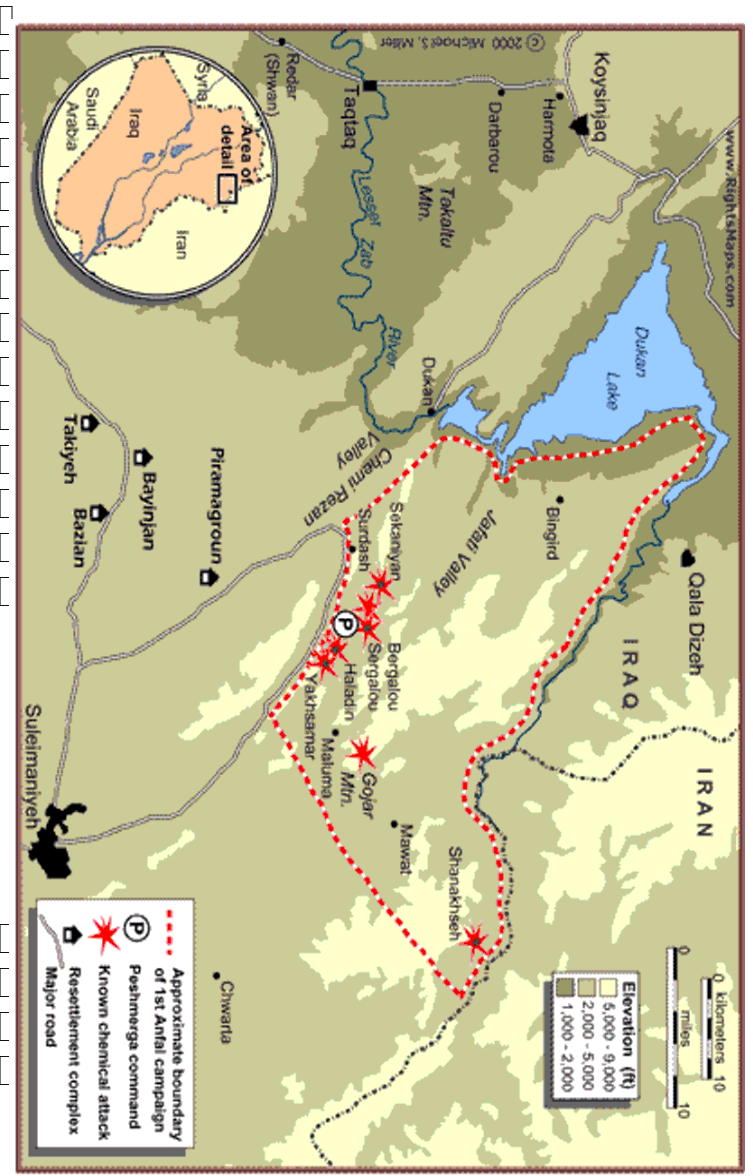
Saddam, this criminal, who had turned the whole country to a prison and the deserts to mass graves, faces the challenges of his own victims. The man who was dressing like a Caesar and walking like a peacock is now in shabby dresses and wearing an unshaved beard. Time changes; I was taken to several detention centers in Iraq with handcuffs now testifying the head of the Ba'ath regime.

Time to relax, time to see the tyranny comes to an end. My grief is unforgettable but somehow relieved. Saddam Hussein is now moving between docks of the criminals and cell of prisons. This is the life. We better know how to gain the respect of the people.

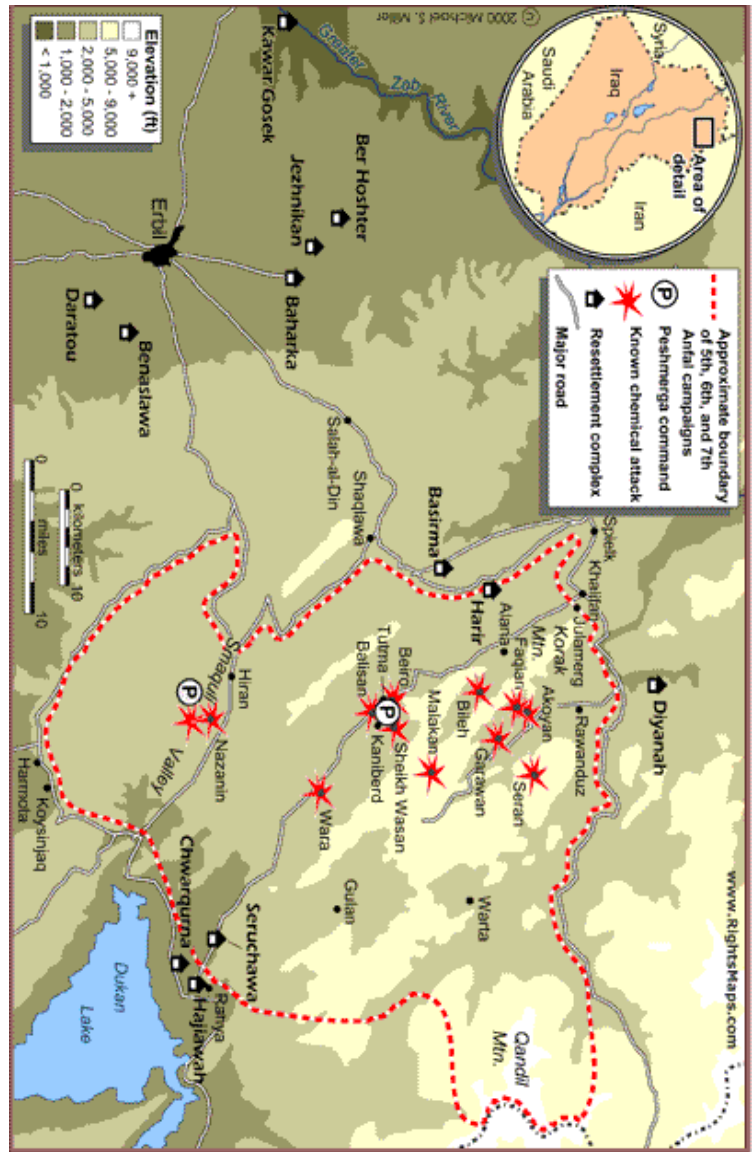
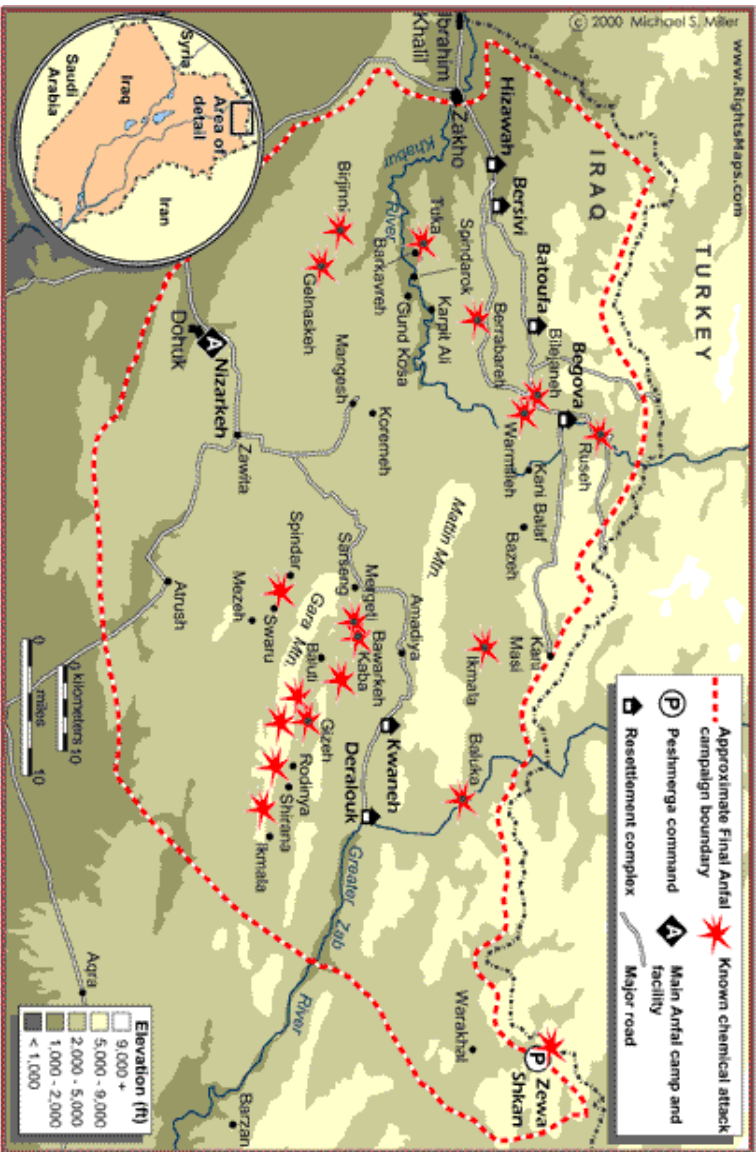


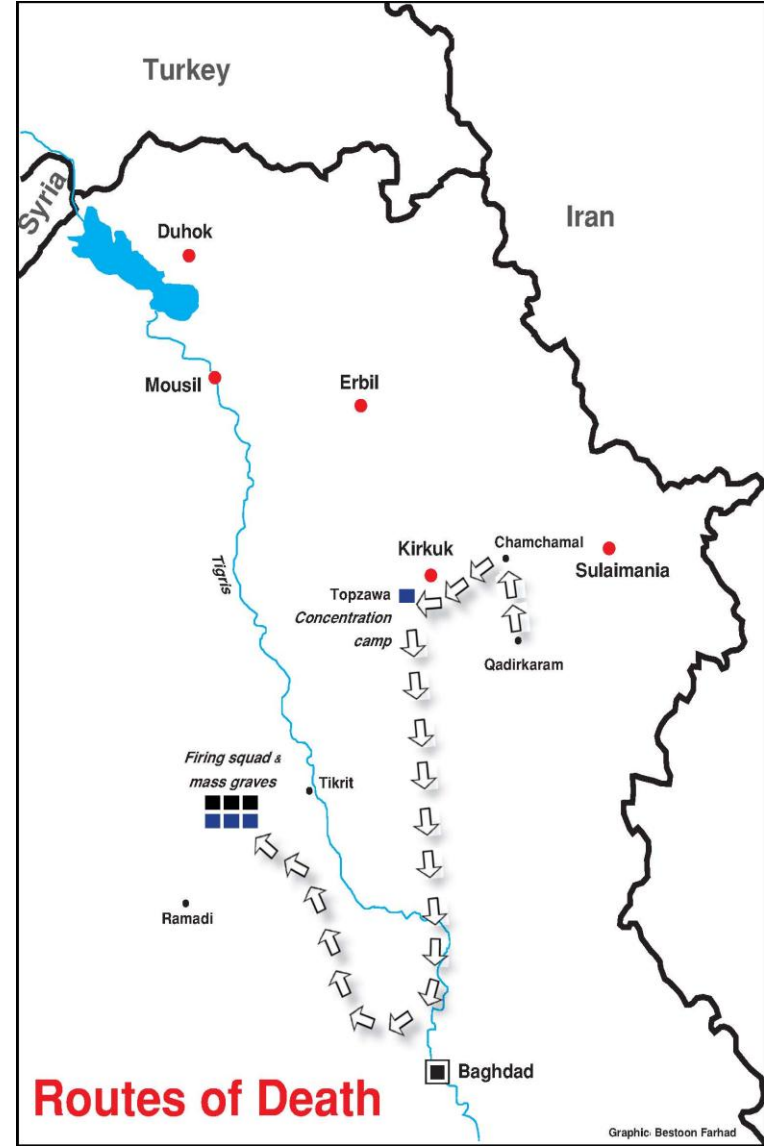
Arif Qurbany & Wahid Kochani  
2012















Abu Nawaf Group











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# WAHID

## An Eyewitness of Anfal Genocidal Crimes

*Saddam's Headsmen took us at gun point to the heart of the desert. They started shooting us at the midnight and covering us quickly with sand using big numbers of bulldozers. They were very secretive. They thought that even Lord is not aware of their crimes. But God was kind enough to save my life and tell the ugly story of Saddam Hussein's regime.*

Wahid Kochani - One of the survivals of Anfal Genocidal Operations in 1988.



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