

The Current Human Right Situation for Iraqi Turkmen

Introduction

According to census statistics, the validity of which are questionable in 1957, Iraqi Turkmen constituted 9% of Iraq's total population. Today the Iraqi population is estimated to be 32 million which make Turkmen population not less than 3 million.

Turkmen reside mainly in the north and middle of Iraq which includes Mosul, Erbil, Salah al-Din, Diyala, Kut and Baghdad, the largest concentration of Turkmen can be found in Kirkuk, the linguistic, cultural and ethnic identity of which has been distinctly colored by their presence. [1]

Kirkuk is an oil-rich city in Northeastern Iraq. Because the city sits on almost 10 billion barrels of oil, control of its administration and resources is highly contested.[2]

Iraqi Turkmen have been subjected to intensive assimilation policies, forced emigration and cultural erosion. They have been victims of assimilation and ethnic cleansing campaigns, marginalized and denied their right of self determination or any role in the state affairs. No Turkmen has held a high position in any Iraqi government. This policy reached its peak during the old regime.

After the fall of the Saddam Hussein's regime in 2003, all Iraqis had high expectations of the new administration established after April 9th, 2003. Turkmen expected to see democracy, justice, equality, fairness, an end to discrimination and an end to violence. Unfortunately, the opposite had occurred.

Confiscation of land

Confiscation of land was one of the major features of the assimilation policies of the Ba'ath regime. Through the Arabization processes by Saddam regime, Turkmen lands has been confiscated and given away to Arabs. During the thirty-five years of Ba'ath regime from 1968 to 2003, the sum of the lands which were confiscated in different provinces was estimated to be more than a half million acres, most of which belonged to Turkmen.

In 2003 after the fall of Ba'ath regime Turkmen regions were exposed to serious Kurdification processes after which the Kurdish parties controlled the Turkmen regions.

Changing the administrative boundaries and seizing the lands by resettling Kurds

About four and half million square meters in total, were occupied by the Kurdish families and Kurdish Peshmerga militias in different neighbourhoods in Kirkuk. Hundreds of luxury houses were built on these lands. More than two thousands of houses and 215 government buildings were occupied. Thousands of houses were built on sporadic regions on the Turkmen's and the government's lands. Several new neighbourhoods have appeared in Kirkuk city. [3] (satellite Map 1 - 5).

The surface area of the Kirkuk city increased about 23 sqkm. (Satellite Map No. 5) The building areas of the Kurdish villages and sub-districts of Kirkuk province have increased several folds.

As a result of the demographic shift seen in all lands seized by Kurdish forces, Kirkuk's council elections and most recent census are seen as fraudulent by Turkmen as they do not accurately reflect Kirkuk's population.[5][4]

The total surface area of the lands confiscated in the Kirkuk region was 57,305,000 square meters, of which about 280 million square meters or 80%, was owned by Turkmen,

The number of complaint cases presented to the Property Claim Commission for all Iraq is about 145,000 cases, of which 45,000 are in the Kirkuk Province only. The majority of these complaint cases are from the Turkmen people. In spite of property legislation demanding the return of seized lands, very little Turkmen land has been restored and very few Turkmen have been compensated for these confiscated lands. Of these complaints, only 5% of cases have been closed, while most cases remain in appellate court. To speed up this process, the Iraqi Turkmen Front presented a proposal to the Iraqi Parliament to regain these lands, but the proposal was rejected due to Arabic opposition.

Almost all the Turkmen regions in the so-called disputed areas were exposed to the same processes. The surface area of the Erbil city has hugely enlarged in the last two decades. In the past few years, the Kurdish authorities have forced the owners of the houses of the three oldest neighbourhoods of Erbil city, which are mainly inhabited by Turkmen, to sell their houses to the government. Several buildings of the Iraqi Turkmen front, which included also the Turkmen radio and television station, were also seized. These buildings have yet to be returned.

In Tuz Khurmatu city, Turkmen lands again was confiscated by the old regime. The total lands confiscated in Tuz Hurmatu was 50.000.000 M. sq. of which the majority was possessed by Turkmen.

After 2003 Turkmen were hoping to get their lands back, but yet again this was far from reality, 4970 cases were presented by Turkmen in this area to the Property Claim Commission in Iraq, of which only 281 were resolved and the rest are still in appellate court. Since then the Kurds built thousands houses on the Turkmen lands in the neighbourhoods of Aksu, Yengi Damlar, al-Jumhuriya and Saylo region. They also built houses for Kurds using the government controlled buildings, such as youth centres and stadiums. Along several kilometres of both sides of the high way road to Baghdad, they established businesses and companies on Turkmen lands.

In the Khanaqin district, the Kurdish authorities built several residential complexes for the incoming Kurds on the municipality and Turkmen agricultural lands, which were confiscated by the Ba'ath regime and not returned yet to the owners. The same process took place in Maneli, Shahraban and Kifri cities.

The amount of the confiscated Turkmen lands by the Ba'ath regime in different districts and provinces were much more than that of the Kurds. Whilst the Kurdish lands were almost all returned, the majority of confiscated Turkmen lands are still not given back to the owners.

Terror against Turkmen

Since 2003 Turkmen started to be exposed to extensive attacks. Hundreds of bombing attacks, assassinations and kidnappings took place in Turkmen regions. They are severely exposed to intimidations, large numbers of Turkmen are arrested, and many are lost. Some of the casualties are as follows:

- Attacks on peaceful demonstration in Tuz Hurmatu killing 8 and injuring more than 20 On 24th August 2003.
- On 9th September 2004 and on 5th September 2005: the Telafer district was attacked twice by helicopters, tanks and tens of thousands of Soldiers, killing more than 1350, and injuring 2650, including a large number of children, women and elders. About seven thousand were arrested; and one thousand are still in prison. During these catastrophes about 48,000 families were displaced from Telafer, of which about 13,000 have still not returned.
- The Turkmen of Tuz Hurmatu are suffering severely since the occupation until today. The attacks on Turkmen has been intensified in last two years, in ten years more than 1389 Turkmen have been killed and injured and 470 houses destroyed. Here are a few examples of some of the attacks;
 1. Attacks on peaceful Demonstration in Tuz Hurmatu killing 8 and injuring more than 20 on 24th August 2003.
 2. Huge bombings in the village of Amirli killing more than 128 Turkmen and wounding 425.
 3. Attacks on 23rd January 2013 against the Turkmen funeral in Tuz Khurmatu of a civil servant assassinated the previous day, leaving at least 53 people dead and injuring a further 117.
 4. On 16th December 2012 two Turkmen teachers were abducted, tortured and burnt alive.
 5. On 13th June 2013 there were attacks on a peaceful demonstration in Tuz Hurmatu to stop the terror against Turkmen in the region, killing at least 13 and leaving more than 23 injured.

The attacks on these areas continue until this day on a daily basis. Most of the Turkmen in these areas were either threatened or kidnapped, their properties have been destroyed. More than 45,000 Turkmen left the city to seek safe refuge in other areas.

Turkmen of Mosul city have suffered almost the same amount, even in recent years many Turkmen have been assassinated there. The attacks on Kaz Koyu, villages of Kara, Bazwaya, and Sherihan left hundreds dead or injured.

In Kirkuk 95% of the terror attacks targeted Turkmen, all the Turkmen academic staff, businessmen, doctors have been threatened to be killed or kidnapped and killed or paid ransom. Turkmen neighborhoods left with no protection despite the heavy presence of security force which are protecting other non-Turkmen neighborhoods.

Some of the Major attacks on Turkmen are:

- Assassination of the Mosul province representative of the ITF on 22nd November 2009.
- Assassination of Colonel Sabah Kara Altun in Kirkuk on 3rd June 2005.
- On 20th June 2009, a massive explosion in Taze Hurmatu killed 82 and injured 228 Turkmen, and destroyed more than 80 houses.
- Assassination of Dr. Amir Said Selbi, academic staff in Mosul University on 8th March 2011.
- The offices of the ITF were attacked occasionally.
- Assassination of Neurosurgeon Yıldırım Abbas Demirci and his brother on 5th September 2011.
- Assassination attempt of Abdul Emir, a guard of president of Kirkuk province council on 11th September 2011.
- Kidnapping of two Turkmen academic staff of the faculty of technology, Kirkuk University; Sami Aslan Riza and Musa Mustafa Veyis, on 5th November 2011.
- Bombing of the house of the Kirkuk province council member and the speaker of the ITF Ali Mehdi on 28th November 2011 which killed a neighbor and injured 15 people.
- Assassination Maj. Gen. Adnan Abdul Razzaq al-Bayyati, director general of internal affairs in Kirkuk province on 4th September 2012.
- Assassination of Dr. Reza Hamza Al Bayati in Kerkuk on 19th September 2012.
- Attack on peaceful demonstration in Tuz Hurmatu killed Iraqi Turkmen Front Vice President Ali Hashim Mukhtar Oglu and board member of the Salahaddin Ahmed Koca on 13th June 2013.
- Assassination of Maj. Gen. Aydin Mosa in Kerkuk on 11th September 2013.

All the Turkmen medical staff in Kirkuk received a threat letter asking them to leave or pay a ransom[6]. The total amount of the ransom which paid by Turkmen is estimated to be more than 50 million US dollars.

Assassinations, threats and kidnappings systematically against the Turkmen people is to terrorize them and to force them to leave their cities and towns.

It can be easily concluded that the number of terrorist attacks on the Turkmen, particularly in the Kirkuk province and Tuz Khurmatu district, are much more than the number of terrorist attacks to which both the Kurds and the Arabs were subjected. The followings are the statistics of the terrorist attacks to which the Turkmen were subjected, in only three Turkmen regions and in only the later eight months, from 1st January - until 30th August 2013

- Three hundred attacks took place in the province of Kirkuk.
- Two hundred seventy attacks were in the Salah al-Din province.

Although every major group in Iraq have strong militia power and have huge presence in the Iraqi Army, Turkmen are still not allowed to form their own defense security force, that is what made them vulnerable to terrorist and ethnic attacks. Every Turkmen city had been a target of explosions that killed thousands of Turkmen so far.

The on going dispute between the central government of Iraq and the regional government of Kurdistan has recently escalated and negatively affects the security situation in the region that is called the disputed area which is dominated by Turkmen. As a result Turkmen heavily paid the price with their lives and properties. These areas are subjected to attacks on daily basis despite the heavy presence of military forces from both Iraq and regional Kurdish government.

Despite the European Parliament Resolution and many other international Human Rights Institutions calls on the Iraqi and Kurdish authorities to put measures into place that guarantee the safety and security of Iraqi Turkmen, no action has been taken by Iraqi and Kurdish authorities to protect Turkmen. The Kurdish authority opposed the recommendation to form a security force in these areas, and hence Turkmen are continually being plagued by ethnic and sectarian violence and discrimination.

Different issues

- Turkmen are deprived from their share of ordinary and high governmental positions and given some symbolic posts and positions in the governing councils and parliament.

- The lack of appointment for Turkmen in governmental and municipality is clearly observed. While Turkmen appointments for higher governmental posts; for example, ministries and embassies is severe.
- In most of the Turkmen regions, one group dominates the security and police forces. All recent Iraqi elections have been organized while this group dominates the administration, police and security in most of these areas. All the election stages have been violated and exposed to fraud.

Conclusions

Despite the reference in the Constitution of the rights of Turkmens, they continue to be plagued by ethnic and sectarian violence and discrimination;

In view of the above stated facts, it becomes clear that the Turkmens of Iraq are suffering from genocide and ethnic cleansing; they are exposed to daily violation of human rights, their security is absent, their economic situation deteriorates and they flee from their land.

Turkmens welcome the statement by the EU High Representative, Catherine Ashton, where she highlighted the needs to use the many tools at the EU's disposal to put pressure on the Iraqi government to put measures into place that guarantee the safety and security of all Iraqi people and particularly those who are vulnerable to targeted violence; such as the Turkmen.

Turkmens welcome the European Parliament Reslution to condemn the attacks on Iraqi Turkmens and it calls on the Iraqi and Kurdish authorities to provide protection for them.

The miserable situation of the Iraqi Turkmen, needs to be highlighted to get support from the regional and international Communities, particularly, the United Nations, the United States of America and the European Parliament.

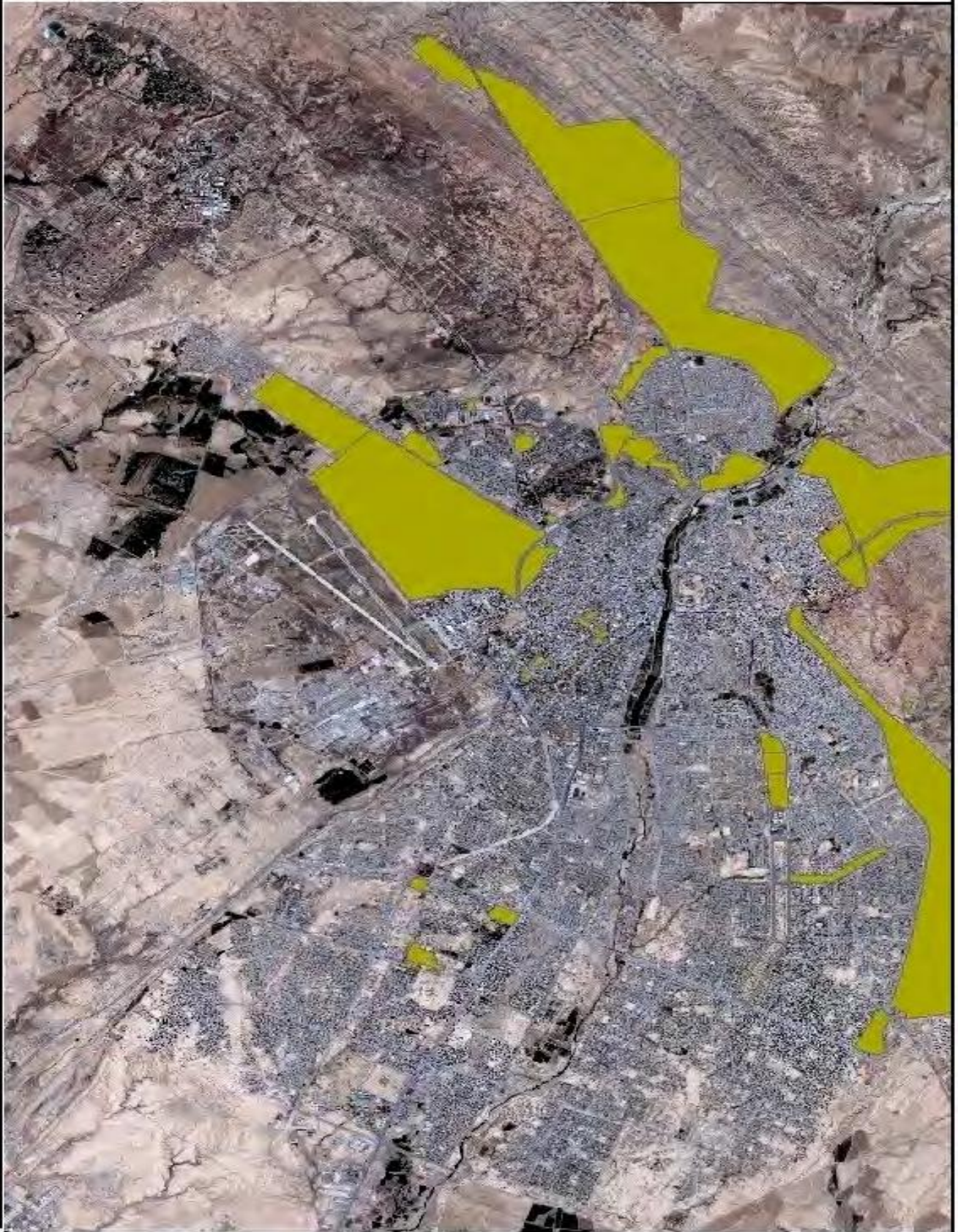
The Turkmen of Iraq support a united democratic Iraq and expect to see justice, equality, fairness, an end to discrimination, the right to self-determination and an end to violence. Unfortunately, these expectations are far from reality.

Turkmens request to obtain rights equal to those obtained by other groups and save whatever is left of our unique culture and population. This will bring peace, stability and cooperation between all ethnic groups in the region which will make it a good role model for the rest of the Middle East.

References:

1. Edward Y. Odisho, City of Kerkuk: No historical authenticity without multi-ethnicity. North-eastern Illinois University, Chicago, IL U.S.A., Page 5 – 6.
2. Iraq Petroleum Company, <http://almashriq.hiof.no/lebanon/300/380/388/ipc/>
3. SOITM Report, "the summary of violation of the Human Rights of the Iraqi Turkmen and attempts to assimilate them during the dictatorial Ba'ath Period" dated 13th December 2003., http://turkmen.nl/1A_soitm/GR.pdf
4. Provincial Councils Act No. 36, art. 23 adopted in 2008 prevented elections in Kerkuk, which asked that the voters and electoral billets should be reviewed.
5. Article 16 of the Parliamentary Election Law Article 6, 2009
6. "**Annex1**" Iraqi Turkmen Doctors' Association Statement.

Building area in Kerkuk city between 2002 and 2007



Yellow colour points to the lands which were built between 2002 and 2007



Part of the eastern border of Kerkuk city
Satellite Map of Kerkuk province the Map of 2002 compared with the map of 2007



Part of the eastern border of Kerkuk city
Satellite Map of Kerkuk province the Map of 2002 compared with the map of 2007



East of Shorja neighbourhood
Satellite Map of Kerkuk province the Map of 2002 compared with the map of 2007

Annex1

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In the name of god the most merciful

Turkmens form the third largest ethnicity in Iraq followed by Arabs and Kurds; they are one of Iraq's primary components. They have been deliberately neglected by successive governments for decades and this has become clearer after the fall of the previous regime. Iraqi Turkmens especially doctors, pharmacists, businessmen, educated, wealthy citizens and their families have been exposed to kidnapping, killing, threatening processes and these phenomena are still continuous. This is clear evidence to what was mentioned above. We review some of the abductions, killing and threatening processes against Iraqi Turkmen working in the medical sector.

First;

1. Dr.Ridha Ameen / A specialist in community medicine,
He was kidnapped on his way to work in Alhawija County. Although his relatives paid a ransom of \$35000, he died as a martyr as a result of torture.
2. Dr.Haider Zain Alabideen/ A retired specialist in Ear, Nose &Throat,
He was kidnapped from his home one year ago and his fate is unknown till now.
3. Dr.Mohamed Fatih/ A general practitioner
His son was kidnapped and he paid a ransom of \$10000 to release him.
4. Dr.Mohsin Abd Almajeed/ A retired ophthalmologist
His son was kidnapped and he paid a ransom of \$10000 to release him.
5. Dr.Yeldrem Abbas Jaafar/ A neurosurgeon
His brother was kidnapped from his clinic in front of the patients and he paid a ransom of \$30000, he died with his brother on 05/09/2011 after writing this report.
6. Dr. Majid Najj Agha/ A physician
He was threatened twice and he paid \$15000
7. Dr.Hamza Ali Sharif/ A general surgeon
He was threatened and he paid \$15000
8. Dr.Jamal Abd Alwahab/ Ophthalmologist
He was threatened and he paid \$15000
9. Dr.Waleed Mohamed Ali/ A physician
He was threatened and he paid \$15000
10. Dr.Yawiz Ahmed Mohamed/ Physician
He was threatened and he paid \$15000
11. Dr.Abd Almunaf/ Physician
He paid \$3000 and still is threatened. Terrorists broke into his house.
12. Dr.Ali Akram Ismael/ A specialist
He was threatened and he paid \$5600. An attempt to kidnap him has failed in front of his evening clinic in the middle of Kirkuk in Doctors' Street recently.
13. Dr. Ikhlas Raooif/ A specialist in Gynaecology and Obstetrics
She was threatened and paid a ransom of \$15000.
14. Dr. Kolsel Baktash/ A specialist in Gynaecology and Obstetrics
She was threatened and paid \$20000.
15. Pharmacist Mohamed Sidqi
He was threatened and paid \$20000.

16. Dr.Nawal Subhi/ A specialist in Gynaecology and Obstetrics
She was threatened and paid a ransom of \$20000.
17. Dr.Hijran Kamal/ Physician
He was threatened and paid a ransom of \$10000
18. Dr.Tonji Namiq/ Specialist in Ear, Nose &Throat
He was threatened and paid a ransom of \$10000.
19. Dr. Ondar Hameed Bahjat/ Plastic Surgeon
He was threatened and paid a ransom of \$10000.
20. Pharmacist Mustafa Kamal
He was threatened and paid \$5000; he left his occupation for three years.
21. Dr. Saad Fakhr Aldin/ Surgeon
He was threatened and paid a ransom of \$10000.
22. Pharmacist Boshra Mahmood
She was kidnapped from Alriyadh region and paid a ransom of \$15000.
23. Dr. Mohamed Noor Aldin/ Ophthalmologist
He was exposed to several kidnap attempts and finally his son was kidnapped and he was released by a central force from Baghdad.
24. Dr Nisreen Ihsan/ General Practitioner
She was threatened several times and forced to leave her clinic.
25. Dr.Hashim Mohamed/ Radiologist
He was kidnapped for more than 40 days from the front of his home, he paid \$250000 to release him.
26. Dr.Jihad Dimirji/ Dentist
His son was kidnapped and he paid a ransom of \$30000.
27. Dr.Adwol Ali/ A retired Ophthalmologist
He was kidnapped from his home and paid a ransom of \$400000to free him, he left his home and his work and travelled outside Kirkuk with his son Dr. Ali Adwol/ Plastic Surgeon.
28. Dr. Yashar Abd Alqadir/ Surgeon
He was threatened, left his home and travelled outside Iraq.
29. Dr. Kelshan Jameel/ Specialist in Gynaecology and Obstetrics
She was threatened, left her home and work and travelled outside Iraq.
30. Dr.Omar Faiq/ Surgeon
He was threatened, left his home and travelled outside Iraq.
31. Dr. Mohamed Noor Aldin/ Neurosurgeon
He was threatened, left his home and migrated abroad.
32. Dr.Aiden Fadhil/ Specialist in Orthopaedics
There was an attempt to kidnap him from the front of his house, he left his home and his work place and migrated abroad for more than three years.
33. Dr.Orkhan Hassan Hussein/ General Practitioner
He was assaulted and his car was stolen.
34. Dr. Boshra Mustafa/ Specialist in Obsterics and Gyneacology
There was a failed attempt to kidnap her on her way back to her home when she was driving her private car.
35. Dr.Anwar Abid/ Rheumatologist
There were several failed attempts to kidnap him.
36. Dr. Nail Haqi/ Dentist

There was a failed attempt to kidnap him during which he had bullet wounds in his chest.

37. Dr. Amid Nadhim/ A specialist in Ear, Nose and Throat
He was threatened several times.

38. Dr. Nabeel Hamdi/ Surgeon
He was threatened several times.

39. Dr. Idrees Ghazi/ Physician
He was threatened several times.

40. Dr. Bahjat Haider/ Physician
He was threatened several times.

41. Dr. Fuad Zaidan Mustafa/ Specialist in Orthopaedics
He was threatened for three years to force him to leave his house in First Arafah region.

42. Dr. Fadhil Khorsheed/ Dentist
His son was kidnapped, released by paying a ransom of \$50,000

43. Pharmacist Ali Talib
He was threatened and there was a failed attempt to kidnap him, and his clinic was robbed.

44. Dr. Jodat Izat/ Paediatrician
He was threatened several times.

45. Dr. Mohamed Adnan Salih/ Urology surgeon
He was killed at his house after he came back from his clinic.

46. Pharmacist Yeldiz Yashar Alwindawi
She was kidnapped and killed; her body was not found till now.

We apologize to our colleagues if we did not mention their names due to lack of information.

Second:

As a result, the department of health in Kirkuk had distributed weapons to some doctors and pharmacists in order to protect themselves. Unfortunately the department were discriminating in the process of distribution of these weapons, in which the department had classified doctors and pharmacists into groups; the first group took pistols while the second group took machine guns. However those weapons were blocked from Turkmen doctors. This raises questions as although Turkmen were the ones exposed to kidnapping, killing and extorting, the weapons were blocked from them. The head of health department was supposed to have some justice in distributing these governmental weapons especially to the Turkmen doctors who needed them most as they were most at risk to those criminal acts.

I wanted to clarify this fact for all, so that they will decide and evaluate the act of head of health department towards the weak security situation.

Third:

From those criminal cases it is clear that Turkmen doctors' lives and their families were exposed to the physical and mental torture, and as a result they were forced to leave their jobs and homes as they migrated abroad. All what is required is protection, moral and financial compensation and improving their living conditions, so this will be a factor to encourage them to return to their jobs and practice their profession in order to serve Iraq and its people.

Fourth:

It is important to provide the necessary protection to Turkmen doctors or others until their lives are settled and everyone can be reassured that they are safe to return to their work with peace of mind, and guaranteed their rights and their future.

Thank you for your attention,
Iraq Turkmen Doctors Association