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Invisible Crime in Northern Kurdistan

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ABSTRACT

What happens after the crime of genocide, is the eradication of nation's culture in all aspects such as: language and customs. The Kurds are the big victims of this policy. The cultural genocide of Kurds has been applied in Turkey in a widespread manner. Turkey during the years of their rule on Kurds put into destruction Kurdish culture and identity in different ways such as: prohibition of language and the ban of newspapers and books' publication in Kurdish and etc.... Since, this article has considered actions called cultural genocide in Kurdistan of Turkey.

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Introduction

Genocide is compound of the Greek word "Genos" means "race, nation or tribe" and so the Latin suffix "Cide" means "killing". Raphael Lemkin a Jews Lawyer from Poland, for the first time in 1944 coined this term.¹ During the organizing of the United Nation Lemkin starts to fight to bring crime of genocide in international law into account. He believed that genocide in comparison with other crimes is horrible crimes that not only astound human conscience but also deeply affects human interests. On 9 December of 1948 (One day before the pass of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights), United Nation General Assembly passed the convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide by 50 votes in favor and no votes against and came into force in 1951.² More than one hundred countries in those years adopted this convention. Lemkin defines genocide as "organized program of different actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of life of national groups, with the aim of destroying the groups themselves". Some scholars and activists have attempted to increase the scope of this definition beyond the one that is provided in the convention,³ but the genocide convention in 1948 despite the efforts of many countries of the Socialist bloc and Third World because of Western countries' opposition, the offer of adding actions called cultural genocide to convention text with 25 Votes against and 16 votes in favor and 4 abstentions not passed. Subsequently, the (Article 2) of this convention in the statutes of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda and the Rome Statute and so the 1966 plan of Crimes against Peace and Security of Mankind, without adding cultural genocide to the list of international crimes was repeated identically. The cultural genocide is applied as a destructive policy of some governments against national, ethnical, racial and religious groups that the Kurd nation is a big

victim of this policy. Kurd is a national group that different religions observed in it, Such as Islam (Shia and Sunni), Christian, Jewish, Yazidi, Yarsan and etc.... Kurdish is one of the one hundred common languages in the world and is written in three different alphabets Latin, Cyrillic and Arabic. although this language is not disappeared but it could not be developed due to pressure. The reason can be that the Kurds are divided in four countries, Turkey, Syria, Iran and Iraq. Even significant numbers of them live in Russia and Armenia. Different dialects of it (Krmanj, Soran, Kalthor and Hawrami) could not simply participate and cooperate in the development of its language.⁴ Kurdish Calendar is solar and its' origin is when the Median Kingdom instituted as the first dynasty in Iran. Despite the lack of criminalization of cultural genocide in the international law, must be said although these actions are not visible, but the result of it is very painful and sad. What happens after this crime is the eradication of nation's culture in all aspects such as: language and customs. The actions called cultural genocide against the Kurd nation in two areas (the Northern and Western Kurdistan) have been stronger and more explicitly. since there are some limitations, this article has considered just Turkish Kurdistan.

Turkey

The north of Kurdistan that in the lexicon of states is known as the Kurdistan of Turkey, is the most populous region of dominated Kurdistan that has over twenty million Kurds within. Since the 1920s in Turkey, secular regime made efforts to suppress Non-Turkish identity. Their Minister of Justice in that time stated: "Those who are not of pure Turkish race in this country can only have one right and that is the right to be servants and slaves". Kurdish dress was prohibited, Kurds called "mountain Turks". This means that the Kurds are those Turks who live in the mountains. To intensify the humiliation and denial of identity the word Kurd officially was touted as an insult. Also Kurdistan renamed East of Turkey. In the Article 88 of the Turkish constitution reads "all inhabitants of Turkey regardless of religious and ethnic origins, are Turks". The former leader of the Turkey government says: "There is no

¹ - Lemkin, Raphael; " Genocide As a Crime Under International Law, 1947, American Journal law, Vol.41. p. 35

² - Report of the Committee on foreign relation, US senate, on The Genocide Convention; sen exec Rpt 99-2,99th Cong. July 18, 1985, at pp 18-9,,26-7

³ - Anderson, Linda; "Home Strits"; South China Morning Post, (SCMP), 3. July. 2004. P.18

⁴ - Koivunen, Kristiina; "The Invisible War in North Kurdistan"; Helsinki, April 2002; p. 117

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nation in the world to be a separate nation called Kurd, they are not only our compatriot but also are our racial brothers". This shows the denial of Kurdish separate identity and emphasize that the Kurds are Turks not a nation with different language, history and identity. In an interview in 1998 with the president of the National Union of Kurds took place in Stockholm, he stated: ((If one of Turkish –Kurds identity is asked he will answer: "I am Kurd under the domination Turkish flag". This situation shows a person that has no identity, no national flag, personalized newspapers, schools, television, libraries, research institutes, and similar things in Kurdish. In this situation when one is aware of his/her Kurdish identity despises himself/herself and while he/she sees his/her mother tongue which is arrived from his ancestors and the least right which has, is in danger of annihilation, feels outrage. It was only in 2001 that publication and broadcasting in Kurdish legislated (it was also in line with government policies promoting). The use of Kurdish language is still banned in schools.⁵ National Anthem at Schools for Kurds is the voice of honour to be Turk and denial of own Kurdish identity.

The Kurd's uprising in 1925 (Sheikh Saeed Piran) was inhibited by repressive measures of army. These operations resulted in the destruction of over 200 villages, destruction of over 8,000 homes and killed more than 15,000 people that surely these acts were done in order to destroy culture and independent race of Kurds. Ismet Inono the prime minister in that time in his speech explaining own position about Kurds said: "We are obviously nationalist. Nationalism is the only thing that connects us together... The price for those who live in our country will move toward Turkism". All Turkish laws, also, have been set to prohibit all different nationalities in order to enjoy their natural rights. Article 11 of the Resettlement Act of 1934 prohibits any attempts of Non-Turkish in order to preserve their traditions and culture. Thus, the Legal justification for the cultural genocide of Kurds is provided. And then this famous statement of Ataturk on government buildings: "how lucky is the person who calls himself a Turk".

Since 1924 speaking Kurdish was banned in public and private places, but the internal and International pressures caused some changes in the situation of Kurds especially in their language. Famous orientalist Nikitin in relation to Turkey's Policy has written: "In 1926 to 1927, about one million Kurd women, men and children have been caused to migrate to the West of Anatolia and the Policy of genocide with denial Kurds claim as an independent political entity or nation has been taken up by Turkey". In the book of Bruoin Sen has come: Turkish populist ideas was the nation building policy that deny the existence of a separate culture called Kurd and so as a result of an order Kurds became Turks.⁶

In 1932/5/5, the Turkish government immediately announced that they approved an act that permits "to force Kurds who are living in the East to migrate and to leave their region" and according to this act, to force to migrate, prohibition of using Kurdish language and disappearing of Kurd's national elements was carried. In relation to this, Bruoin Sen says: "the landed properties of eastern provinces (Kurdistan) were given to Turkish immigrants who came from elsewhere

and this policy expanded and reached to its logical conclusion which was genocide".⁷

Certainly one of the most important elements of any minority culture, is its language. In other words, language, is national identity card of everybody and so is the identity of every nation. With the disappearance of a language; cultural and social integration of generations, sense of security of preserving identity and collective values of an ethnic or a nation will be destroyed. Losing these components imposes the values which are different from his own identity upon him and will cause high levels of alienation; causes physical and mental damage, and rapid growth in social irregularity so that these problems will appear into irregular growth of offences.

In April 1991 the Act (2932) allowed Kurds to use Kurdish language in private conversations! But Kurdish language still not used for political and teaching purposes and issues related to history, culture and national identity of Kurds are now also distort, humiliate and denied, and those who resist against this policy they are chased and arrested by Secret State Department according Anti-Terror law and called terrorists only for this reason that they are asking for their identity preserving. Since the early 1990s up to now Turkish government have been trying to convince the international community that the restrictions imposed on the Kurdish national language is over and they have complete liberty of language. But studying constitution of Turkey shows a different story for example: Article42(section3) states that: "education should be carried out along the principles and reforms of Ataturk "and in(section9) "No language other than Turkish as a mother tongue should not be taught to Turkish citizens at any institutions of training". Also on the other article constitution of the country, knows Turkey as a nation that has one language and denies the existence of other language except Turkish. The important point is that this article with the conformity of act is non-appeal.⁸

In August 1996 Cultural and Research Institute of Kurdistan, delivered a permit application to the Council of Education of Istanbul for forming a courses to teach Kurdish. But in March of next year, The Institute received a negative response from The Council of Education. This has led to strong protests and this Institute began teaching in Kurdish without a license but military and security forces dismantled the course. According to Act (2932) making decisions about foreign language training after obtaining idea of the National Security Council, is done by the Council of Ministers. At an similar act, also, the public and private financial support to teach a language other than Turkish are allowed just for English, French, Russian, German, Italian, Spanish, Arabic, Japanese and Chinese.

In the late 1990s, despite financial difficulties and many other problems, numbers of Magazines were published in Kurdish in Istanbul. Although these magazines were legal but, buying and owning of these magazines were dangerous for their readers. Because in turkey buying publications which is published in Kurdish can be a reason on cooperation with (P.K.K).⁹ Representatives of the Enstîtuya Kurdî in Istanbul estimated in January 1999 that about 30% of the Kurds in Turkey have forgotten their mother language. Even among the rest there are very few who can read and write Kurdish. ((I have heard about traumatic childhood memories concerning how Kurdish children needed someone to translate for them when

⁵ - Goldstein, Melvyn; A history of Modern Tibet 1913-1951, The Decline of the Lamasit State, (Berkeley: University of California). 1989, pp. 42-3 , 513-15

⁷- Murely, Milton; Edward Pitter and Hinsh Kliff; Crisis in Middle East,p.92, 2006

⁸- Bruin, Sen, Martin; The sociology of the Kurd Peaple; Agha ,Sheikh and State,p.392,1945

⁸ - Article 26/C 3

⁹ - Partiya Kargarên Kurdistan (Kurdistan Labours Party)

talking with their mothers during holidays from boarding school))!¹⁰ An institute which studies about the east in Germany in 1999 published a book named "Facilities of dispute resolution in the Republic of Turkey". In this book we have "Turkey banned Kurdish names, and in the rules of this country Kurdish language is forbidden." This country also in the film industry and cinema, portrays Kurds, wild, backward and terrorist. According to the Turkish Penal Code "Speaking in Kurdish is a crime and for each word, they have to pay 5 Turkish Qrsh." Turkish sociologist and humanitarian Bishkchi has written: "Turkish government and Turkey's broad ideology, denies Kurdish language and nation. He points out they (Turkey) were able to eliminate a four thousand years nation to an unimaginable extent, the real owner of this land and humiliate and capture Kurds. In the Turkish domestic laws Kurdish people in Turkey have not been identified."¹¹

Cobarrubias divides government dealing with minority languages into five categories:

1. attempting to kill a language
2. letting a language die
3. unsupportive coexistence
4. partial support of specific language functions
5. adoption as an official language

Situation of Kurdish in Turkey can be analyzed according to the above classification. From 1924 to 1991 governor was clearly the dominant position of the first level; Turkey was trying to destroy Kurdish. Since 1991 with approval of Act (2932), the Kurdish position changed from the first to the second. They were allowed to be used Kurdish in private conversations and songs, it means that Turkish authorities did not attempt to destroy the Kurdish obviously but instead they allowed this language to die. According to this act Kurdish can not be used in politics and learning purposes; so it is still very far from the position of the third level.¹² But the fact is that when a language not used and applied in publishing books, publications, teaching in schools, offices and organizations, after a period, loses its value as a language and will lead to the destruction of language. This situation is a deliberate and affirmative policy and isn't in second level, but remained at the first level.

In 1965 the illiteracy rate among the rural female population in 14 Kurdish provinces was 93% and there was one province where it was 99%. Among the urban female population the illiteracy rate was 72%. At that time more than half of the men in the Kurdish provinces, 59% were illiterate. At the end of the 1970s the illiteracy rate in the Turkish part of Turkey was 41% and in the Kurdish part 72%. By 1990, the average literacy rate in Mardin province was 48% (the average in Turkey was 78%).¹³ These changes and proportional improvement in the literacy situation of Kurds in Turkey comes from the fact that Turkish government has changed their tactics in dealing with the Kurds. At first, Turkish authorities thought maintaining Kurds illiterate is the best way to control them but then with passing of time and circumstance's Changing the government's attitude has also changed. The new strategy of government as the main tool of assimilation of Kurds was the use of training Turkish language in schools. In Turkey even in the time of writing this text, there is a little police station in every school in the State of

Emergency Region. "For the sake of security", police ensure that the teachers follow the government's will in school. For example, every morning the pupils must properly sing the Turkish national anthem (Song which, its' text suggests the denial of Kurdish identity). Also those police forces have a duty is searching in schools and classrooms to not allow teachers to use Kurdish language to teach.¹⁴

A Kurdish teacher tells of teaching Kurdish children

"By law I am not permitted to speak Kurdish with the children; it is also forbidden to use an interpreter. This means that it is very difficult to communicate with Kurdish children who might know only two words of Turkish when they begin school: yes and no".

In the early 1960s another attempt that Turkish government did to destroy Kurds culture and in the direction of the genocide policies was separating children from their families for training in boarding schools to make them Turkish, Similar to what the Europeans did in the nineteenth century against the American Indians.¹⁵

At the end, it is necessary to mention some of the Turkish constitution: (Article 66 section C2) revised on October 17, 2001, (natural citizenship and consequently being Turkish citizen, only known cases that parents are Turk). This means that if one's parent were Kurd, he/she is not citizen of Turkey. On the other article "National solidarity, respecting human rights and being loyal to Ataturk nationalism is considered."¹⁶ Clearly Ataturk nationalism and human rights are in conflict, because Ataturk denied a nation called as Kurd with separate identity and he was after destruction of the minority in Turkey.

Conclusion

Policy of cultural genocide is further observed in governments that fear of different groups exist in their territory. Turkish government that there are minority of Kurds in its sovereign territory are in this category and always have a fear that Kurds have had their own culture and identity, and enjoy it and that is why they have genocide policies in their programs. Turkey which has more than twenty million Kurds, following the assimilation policy has been widely pursue the genocide of the Kurds since Kamal Ataturk. Since the 1920s in Turkey, secular regime made efforts to suppress Non-Turkish identity. Language which most scholars believe that is most important cultural component has set in invasion by Turkish governance and many attempts have been made to destroy it. Kurdish in this country's laws is a banned language that speaking it is fine 5 Qrvsh Turkish. In the laws of this country the only language which is allowed in educational centers is Turkish and any opposition with this status faces with Secret State Department. Only Turkish language should be taught in schools and any teacher or student has no right to speak Kurdish and to ensure that, each school has a police unit to control that in conversations and education only Turkish speak and Turk's National Anthem which is deny the existence of Kurdish identity should be read in schools every day. In Studies which were done in 1999 approximately 30% of Turkey's Kurds have forgotten their mother tongue and among the number of remaining a very small number could read or write in Kurdish. The contents expressed in this text is just a very small part of Sufferings and oppressions that imposed on the Kurdish people in Turkey

¹⁰ - Op .Cit; Koivunen, Kristiina; p.117

¹²- Besikçi, Ismail; Thirty-three bullets, First publication,p.30, 1997

¹²- Op.Cit Koivunen, Kristiina; p.116

¹³ - Ibid; p.117

¹⁴ - McDowall, David; A Modern History of the Kurds. I.B. Tauris, London and New York 1997, p.435

¹⁵ - Op.Cit; Koivunen; p.118

¹⁶ - Article2

country which requires more opportunity for further discussion of this issue.

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