

## **Bibliography of Holocaust and Genocide Studies**

### **Featured Book in this Issue of GPN: Michael Kelly - The Ghosts of Halajba**

Saddam Hussein's execution for his crimes against Iraq's Shia not only brought an end to his reign of oppression, but also to the justice that was to be served to the Iraqi Kurds. The unspeakable atrocities visited by Saddam upon the Kurds of Iraq are explored here, together with the trials of Saddam by the Iraqi High Tribunal. However, this work is more than a litigation history. It is also an exploration of the motivations behind and the depths of organized evil in the context of a single, brutal despot at the helm of an artificially created multi-ethno/religious state lying atop massive oil wealth. Saddam's background and the context of his rule explain much about his actions, but not all. He remained an unpredictable tyrant to the end of his reign.

The Kurds have continually been subject to adversity since the end of World War I, when they were denied their own homeland, splitting them among three countries: Turkey, Iran, and Iraq. During Saddam's 24-year reign, the Kurds of Iraq were frequently under the knife of injustice. Between 1987 and 1989, Saddam unleashed genocide, razing over 2,000 villages and murdering at least 50,000 Kurds. As his dictatorship came to an end, the Kurds long-awaited opportunity to hold Saddam responsible for the atrocities against them seemed to have come, only to be sidetracked by the Iraqi High Tribunal, the Iraqi government, and the U.S. government. While the Shia rejoiced in their victory, the Kurds continued to be left behind. Saddam's death freed him of the charges against him by the Kurds. The world had turned its back on the Kurds in their age of genocide, and now appeared to turn a blind eye to the justice that was denied.

The unspeakable atrocities visited by Saddam upon the Kurds of Iraq are explored here together with the trials of Saddam by the Iraqi High Tribunal—both the completed prosecution for the Dujail massacre against the Shites and the incomplete one for the Anfal Campaigns against the Kurds. However, this work is

more than a litigation history. It is also an exploration of the motivations behind and the depths of organized evil in the context of a single, brutal despot at the helm of an artificially created multi-ethno/religious state lying atop massive oil wealth, but situated in the most dangerous part of the world. Saddam's background and the context of his rule explain much about his actions, but not all. He remained an unpredictable tyrant to the end of his reign.

--Michael J. Kelley

## Foreword

*Ghosts of Halabja.* This title refers to a very specific crime - the chemical gassing of a Kurdish village in northern Iraq in 1988 by the forces of Saddam Hussein. He was to be tried for this crime before the Iraqi High Tribunal, but that trial against him will never take place. Saddam was executed in 2006 for the massacre of 148 men and boys from the town of Dujail. The attack on Halabja occurred during the Anfal campaigns, which were a military operation carried out against the Kurds of Iraq from 1987 to 1988. Saddam's execution occurred half-way through his trial for the Anfals.

I was the chief investigative judge for the Iraqi High Tribunal. As such, it was my office that indicted Saddam Hussein and his cohorts for the Dujail massacre and the Anfal campaigns. I spent many hours questioning Saddam and learned to avoid his manipulative personality in order to learn what he knew and what he was responsible for in connection with the crimes for which he was charged. I also spent many hours and days in the field at mass graves and with survivors of his atrocities. These trials represented a great turning point for justice in Iraq.

For decades, the Iraqi people were terrorized by secretive courts linked directly to Saddam's regime. The chance to finally hold Saddam and his government accountable for what they had done was too great an opportunity to squander by killing him. Bringing him to justice in the best way possible would help re-establish the basic concept of justice for Iraqis and show them that everyone, even the most powerful person, would be held accountable eventually.

It is unfortunate that Saddam Hussein was executed in the manner that was carried out and it is unfortunate that the Anfal trial against him could not be completed. This history of the Kurds under Saddam's regime that Professor Kelly has written helps to tell the story that could not be adequately told in court. The

Kurdish people are strong and very resilient. Their culture as a part of Iraqi culture is very rich and their heritage is one of which they should be proud. Saddam's regime could hurt them, and he did so grievously. But he could not bury their indomitable spirit. The courage and faith of the Iraqis in a better future should give us all hope - for a better Iraq and a better world.

Ra'id Juhi al Saedi Former Chief Investigative Judge - Iraqi High Tribunal

## **Table of Contents**

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

FOREWORD

PREFACE

INTRODUCTION: SADDAM HUSSEIN & THE PRELUDE TO GENOCIDE

PART ONE: GENOCIDE OF THE KURDS

CHAPTER 1 KURDISTAN (INTRO & BACKGROUND ON REGION & PEOPLE)

CHAPTER 2 THE ANFAL CAMPAIGNS

CHAPTER 3 THE GASSING OF HALABJA

PART TWO: THE TWO GULF WARS

CHAPTER 4 THE 1991 PERSIAN GULF WAR

CHAPTER 5 DIVIDED LOYALTIES (INTERNAL DISSENT W/N KURDISH FACTIONS)

CHAPTER 6 THE 2003 IRAQ WAR

PART THREE: SADDAM ON TRIAL

CHAPTER 7 CREATION OF THE IRAQI HIGH TRIBUNAL

CHAPTER 8 THE DUJAIL TRIAL

CHAPTER 9 THE ANFAL TRIAL & SADDAMS EXECUTION

CHAPTER 10 INTERNATIONAL LAW THE ROAD NOT TAKEN

CONCLUSION

NOTES

BIBLIOGRAPHY

APPENDICES

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