

The Psychology of Criminal Behavior: Understanding the Mind of Offenders in Anfal Campaign.

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Abstract - English

This Review investigated the psychology of Criminal Behavior in order to understand the Mind of Offenders in Anfal Campaign. First, this review discovered how and why the offenders commit genocide. It then presented a case-study of eyewitnesses to better considerate of genocide. Genocide is the mass killing of members of a national group, resulting in psychological, health and social problems for the survivors. Genocide is not a simple action, it gets more and more sensitive and aggressive behaviour. This Review investigates The Campus, Mass graves, models and theories to understand Mind of offenders. The researcher investigated several models and theories including: Kelman's model, violentization theory, becoming evil, Hallberg's Theory, the psychology of crowds, stages of genocide, Psychoanalytic, rational, and social learning theories. In addition, the study established several survivors of the Kurdish genocide still suffer from psychological and mental problems. Furthermore, the review has made many suggestions and recommendations but the most significant are to provide more psychological and social aid to the survivors, and for the Iraqi government, Ministry of Martyrs and Anfal affairs and researchers to become more involved in the serving the survivors of anfal in Kurdistan Region.

Key words: Criminal Behaviour, Offender's, Eyewitness accounts, Genocide, Anfal Campaign.

1. Introduction

In early February 1988, the former Iraqi president, Saddam Hussein, ordered a huge military operation (Anfal) against the Kurdish people in northern Iraq. The operation took place in the prohibited areas in eight states. The first stage began on 23 February 1988 with the aim of systematically killing and destroying civilians. The final stage of the Anfal ended on 6 September 1988 (Hiltermann, 2008). This approach is commonly known as genocide.

The aim of genocide is considered to be to destroy the lives of members of a national group by impacting on core principles such as personal security, liberty and dignity (Totten et al., 2004; Waller, 2002). The 20th century is known as the century of genocide. Particular examples include the Armenian genocide in Turkey (1914), persecution of the Jews of Europe during the Second World War, the Rwandan genocide of Tutsis (1994), and the killing of the Iraqi Kurds in 1988 (Quandt, 1996; Haperen et al., 2012). Clearly, during the last century and continuing in recent years, genocide has been a destructive reality (Staub, 2000).

To commit murder is generally considered a reprehensible act. The idea of engaging and being complicit in the massacre of a group of people is something that most would consider iniquitous. Widespread suffering and the ultimate loss of life is prevalent every day. It is important to understand how genocide occurs in order to ensure that it does not happen again.

Psychology can be employed to understand the

causes of genocide in order to investigate the killing of human beings (Munn, 2006; Sternberg, 2003). Thus the questions are as follows: Why the offenders commit genocide? What psychological aspects are at play? In exploring and attempting to answer these questions, the purpose of this study is to review the literature on the Criminal Behaviour. In addition, a case-study of genocide in Kurdistan will be presented and interviews with eyewitnesses will be examined to offer a context for what occurred and to help this study better understand the mind of offenders.

2. Defining genocide

Prior to the Second World War, genocide was described as a crime without a name. Lemkin (2005) coined the word ‘genocide’, which comes from the Greek word “genus” meaning race or tribe and the Latin word “cide” meaning killing. Thus, genocide means the killing of a group of people (Jones, 2006, p.10). Furthermore, the crime of genocide is described as the systematic planned destruction in whole or in part of a particular group, nation, religion or ethnic group (Lemkin, 2005).

In the UN’s view, genocide indicates subsequent actions which are committed to demolish, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group; this includes

- a) Killing members of the group;
- b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members;
- c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- d) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group

(Manaktala, 2012, p. 180).

In recent years, Fein (1993) has defined genocide as a powerful action by perpetrators to destroy members of a group physically, through interdiction of the biological and social reproduction of group

members, because of the lack of threat offered by the victim.

3. The stages of genocide

Baum (2008) and Stanton (1998) have illustrated eight stages of the Psychology of Genocide to demonstrate the mind of offenders. The eight stages of genocide are Classification, Symbolisation, Dehumanisation, Organisation, Preparation, Identification, Extermination and Denial.

3.1 Classification

The first stage is Classification, Baum (2008) believed that, this stage refers to Hilberg’s model, as he similarly states that the perpetrators define and classify their target group, which can lead to them committing genocide (Hilberg, 1985). Returning to Baum’s argument, it is necessary to classify ethnicities and nationalities such as Jew, Hutu and Tutsi (Baum, 2008), and also this classification can be seen in Iraq such as (Kurdish, Arab, Turman, Suni, Shee) But it should be noted that, the division and classification of people into different groups cannot lead to genocide without the second stage, symbolization.

3.2 Symbolization

Symbolization is related to classification (Baum, 2008). Here, Stanton (1998) claims that certain symbols can be used to show and name the group members in this stage; the group of people can be symbolised by their skin, colour, and even religion, such as Muslims, Christians and Jews. The Jews were a symbol for Nazi regime, and Kurdish were a symbol for Saddam regime (Stanton, 1998; Baum, 2008).

3.3 Dehumanisation

Dehumanization is the third stage of Criminal Behavior, which is the denial of humanity (Baum, 2008); in Baum’s view, hate and propaganda can be used to start the genocidal killing. Here, the perpetrators see their victims as animals; this means that the target group is less than human. For example, the Nazi regime called the Jews “rats”, and Saddam’s regime called Kurds “saboteurs”,

“Donkeys” and “Dogs” (Middle East Watch, 1993; Baum, 2008).

3.4 Organisation

Most of the criminal Behaviours in the last century were organised and committed by states, such as the killing of Jews in the Nazi camps, and the killing of Tutsi people in Rwanda with machetes (Baum, 2008), as well as the killing of 5000 Kurds with chemical gas by the Iraqi regime, in addition to the organised mass killing of more than 100,000 Kurdish civilians in the mass graves of Iraq, which was possibly an organised crime (Human Rights Watch, 1993). criminal Behavior offenders

3.5 Preparation / Identification

The route to genocide includes preparation, which is the fifth of Baum's eight stages. This includes the list of victims and the mapping of murder. This stage also includes Identification, as the victims are asked to bring their ID cards (Baum, 2008) to confirm their age, religion and ethnicity. For example, the identification of Jews was a legal requirement of the German government, while in the Rwandan genocide, ID cards revealed people's backgrounds, which led to the Tutsis being stopped in their cars at road blocks and slaughtered in the genocide (Baum, 2008, cited in Pigmon, 2011).

3.6 Extermination

The seventh phase in mind of offenders is extermination, which is the actual genocide. According to Stanton (1998, cited in Baum, 2008), the offenders do not consider their victims to be human, which enables them to commit mass murder and genocide quickly. Here, it is possible to say that this stage is probably linked to Kelman's third stage, because both writers accepted that the offenders kill their victims because they think that they are less than human and should be killed (Kelman, 1989; Baum, 2008).

3.7 Denial

The last phase is Denial, where the offenders dig

mass graves to hide the evidence and thus deny the genocidal murder (Baum, 2008, p. 36). For example, Saddam's regime dug mass graves in the Iraqi desert in order to deny the Kurdish genocide. Few people knew that Kurdish civilians had been killed as Saddam's regime buried all the bodies and patrolled the graveyard with strong security units (Human Rights Watch, 1993).

4. Kelman's model of genocide

Kelman (1973) illustrated the psychological conditions of genocide. To understand Psychology of Criminal Behavior and the mind of offenders, Kelman summarises three mental conditions -authority, routinization and dehumanisation – and how these are related to the criminal behavior

4.1 Authority

The first process is Authority. Kelman (1973) claims that criminal behavior will occur in the context of an authority. This is because the orders are given by the highest organisation (government), and the offenders see their crimes as obligatory and accept that they must commit killing against the target group. In this regard, it could be said that genocide is not ordered by ordinary people; rather, the offenders are given orders by the highest authority.

4.2 Routinisation

The next process of mass killing is Routinisation. According to Kelman, routinisation has two meanings. Firstly, it decreases the necessity for decision-making, thus making it easy to avoid the inferences of the act. When genocidal acts become routine, the offenders need to apologise for their acts in order to avoid the penalty for disobedience (Kelman, 1989).

4.3 Dehumanisation

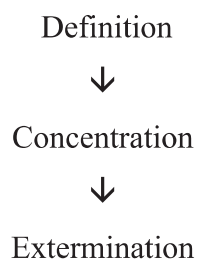
Dehumanisation is Kelman's third process, and it has a great impact on the victims. Here, the victims are the main point, because the offenders see their victims as less than human and are willing to dehumanise them in order to justify destroying them (Kelman, 1989). This process took place

during the Holocaust and Anfal Campaign when the Nazi regime dehumanised the target group during the massacre (Day & Vandiver, 2000). With regard to the three stages of kelman's theory, although he suggested how genocide occurs, further studies have suggested some important psychological motivations for genocide. For instance, Dicks (1972) and Goldhagen & Wohlgeleirnter (1997) suggested that the ideological perpetrators use hatred to dehumanise and harm the target group.

5.1. Hilberg's Model and Genocide

In relation to Criminal Behavior, Hilberg (1985) has investigated a model that illustrates the theory of the destruction of the European Jews; this was used by the Nazi regime in the Holocaust. Hilberg (1985) illustrates the three stages - definition, concentration and extermination - that will occur during the genocide:

The three tools used during the Holocaust against the Jews:



Thus far, Hilberg's model is consistent with Winton's Violentization theory (2008) based on symbolic social interaction and self-interaction. It is focused on how perpetrators act to harm other people.

5.2 Definition

The first part of the model is Definition, as it is important to define the target group who will be the victims of the genocidal killing, as can be observed in the case of the Holocaust when the Nazi regime defined the Jews as the target group (Hilberg, 1985). Similarly, Winton (2008) agreed that the offenders of genocide need to define their target

group as those who will be killed, possibly because the definition of the group will be more likely to separate the target group for harming and killing.

5.3 Concentration

The second stage of Hilberg's model is concentration, in which the offenders make a plan to focus on their victims in order to transfer them to camps. The main reason for this is to separate the victims from society. For instance, during the Holocaust the Jews were incarcerated in Hitler's camps. This is related to violentization theory, as Winton (2008) suggested that the concentration would threaten others as a result of the offenders wish to place the target group in camps. However, it should be noted that, at this stage, the genocide has not yet occurred, as the perpetrators must first plan to commit extermination.

5.4 Extermination

Definition and concentration do not necessarily result in genocide unless they lead to the last stage, Extermination. However, they play a significant role in the genocidal process as the perpetrators use many tools to destroy a huge number of people from the target group, with the aim of killing the victims in a short space of time (Hilberg, 2003).

6. Waller's model (Becoming evil)

In his book, *Becoming Evil: How Normal People Commit Genocide*, Waller (2002) has proposed some of the factors that impact on the individual and social tendency to embrace extraordinary evil. A consideration of three general factors - racism, xenophobia and desire to dominate - may help this study to investigate how and why genocide occurs.

6.1 Racism

Racism is the first factor of criminal behaviour; this occurs when a specific group wishes to be the centre of everything while other people must defer to it. Here, both self-interest and pride have an influence on individual groups. the individual tendency is more likely to have a pre-existing willingness to respect Authority; thus, racism strengthens inside the specific group, as the members believe themselves to be at the centre of

everything. These groups consequently start to believe in genocide against the out-groups. Racist groups are also formed when their members start to think that other groups are not human. But it should be noted that, for racist groups, genocide is more significant for achieving their aims (Waller, 2002).

6.2 Xenophobia

Xenophobia is the second factor leading to extraordinary evil. Waller (2002) points out that racism turns into Xenophobia. This may be due to an increase in hatred and fear of foreign groups, in particular against strangers and different cultures. The perpetrators try to protect their own groups because the phobia plays a significant role inside the group (Waller, 2006). The perpetrators will disagree with and reject other groups of people. Alternatively, xenophobia may refer to the second step of violentization theory, i.e. defence, when perpetrators come to believe that they must harm the target group (Winton, 2008). It is important to identify what kind of people become evil and involved in genocide. In Waller's view, social groups such as governments, propagandists, and the military may encourage people towards xenophobia and racism; these concepts consequently lead to genocide against strangers and out-groups (Waller, 2002)

6.3 Desire to Control

In Waller's view, racism and xenophobia are significantly related to the Desire for Social Dominance, as all racist and xenophobic groups are highly likely to want social dominance. Due to the self-reinforcing play role and has impact on the individuals, dominant force leads to violence and genocide (Waller, 2002). But it should be noted that the perpetrators desire social domination for several possible reasons: firstly, it could be suggested that the third stage of Winton's theory (2008),

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7. Psychoanalytic theory

Psychoanalytic theory was developed by Freud, with researchers in this field suggesting that the Id

needs to find satisfaction immediately. This is because a child's behaviour is driven by pleasure-seeking and it is believed that self-destructive impulses may consequently lead to Criminal Behavior (Hollin, 2013). Furthermore, Freud supposed that offenders are driven by the unconscious, as anxiety and loss of control of the ego can lead to increased criminal behaviour (Siegel, 2014). In another interesting development of psychoanalytic theory, it is pointed out that individuals have two internal motivations to become perpetrators: Eros, the energy of life; and Thanatos, the death force. The aggression of Thanatos moves out of the self onto others, and this internal energy may produce a very dangerous level of personality (Borum, 2004; Bartol & Bartol, 2008). In view of these points, it could be suggested that the offenders of Kurdish genocide may be under the influence of thanatos, which might encourage them to harm the victims.

Although this theory is important for predicting individuals' motivations for committing genocide and explaining how it occurs, it is suggested that childhood experiences and internal processes alone are not enough to evaluate the offenders of genocide. Therefore, psychoanalytic theory has been challenged by researchers. For instance, some studies have criticised this theory for having weak logic and paying insufficient attention to social processes with an empirical and theoretical basis (Beck, 2002; Canter, 2008). In other words, the psychoanalytical development in investigating psychology has been given less attention, and psychoanalytical theory is quite an old theory in the history of psychology, focusing on internal processes and ignoring the social psychological effects, as can clearly be seen in Freud's theory.

8. Social psychology theory

Social learning theory conflicts with psychoanalytic theory in that the criminal behaviour is not the main consequence of the inner process, as Freud commented previously. This theory became a famous method in the 20th century; it was developed by Albert Bandura in the early 1970's, and then become a significant theory in offense studies

(Bandura, 1978). For instance, in Bandura's view criminal behaviour is learned from the social group, which includes family, subgroups, books and media, because these models have a great impact on the development of personality (Bandura, 1978). Thus, it could be said that the individual joins the social group to become an offender. To study this possibility, social psychology theory focuses on the environmental processes that encourage an individual to become an offender seeking to harm others. Recent studies have divided social theory into two sides; the first side is social control theory, where people are groomed by close organisations. The second is social reaction, which suggests that individuals observe crime at an early age and thus become perpetrators (Siegel, 2014).

In other words, researchers of social processes have suggested that individuals have an impact on the control of other groups, because the offenders have power and use social conflict to kill others (Farrington & Chertok, 1993). These scholars have mentioned that the state plays a big role in perpetrating environmental crime, possibly because the political aspect aims to defend the power and situation of the upper classes at the expense of the lower classes (Siegel, 2014). Although this theory is important for investigating the influence of social relations on individuals, the impact of psychological and cognitive aspects that may lead to commit genocidal killing should not be ignored.

9. Theory of crowds

In his book *Psychology of Crowds*, Le Bon has explored the role of the group mind when an individual believes him/herself to be a member of a crowd. The question here is why an individual might become involved in the killing and torture of other human beings. To investigate this question, Le Bon (2009) claims that an individual might be controlled by the group mind, because religious and political leaders encourage individuals to inspire crowds which results in most men gladly obeying orders (Le Bon, 2009).

In addition, researchers in the field of crowds, such as Colman (1991), have found that this psychological concept, de-individualisation, can

play a role in murder. This behaviour is concentrated in violent crowds, resulting in social murders such as genocide (Colman, 1991). However, some researchers disagreed with Le Bon, Colman. For example, Diener et al. (1977) suggest that not all individuals tend to participate in genocide, because most of the de-individualisations of crowds are done to harm others. Further motivations for the psychology of crowds have been found to cause antisocial behaviour. For instance, Spivey and Dunn (1990) suggested that there is a relationship between perpetrators and antisocial behaviour, as de-individualisation results in increased antisocial behaviour. In view of this point, it is possible to say that individuals will challenge and oppose other groups. This is probably a social process, as social theory agrees that individuals join groups to kill other groups (Bandura, 1978). The development of the psychology of the crowd would suggest that the crowd is dominated by individuals' thoughts as well as the social psychological aspects; subgroups and media, in particular, can provide motivations for genocide.

10. Rational choice theory

In recent years, Eysenck, a British psychologist, has tried to advance psychoanalytic and social theories. According to Eysenck, criminal behaviour is not just a result of innate processes, as Freud had claimed. It is not just a result of social processes, as Bandura outlined neither is it simply the consequence of environmental conditions and nervous system. In relation to rational theory, Eysenck (1977) identifies three dimensions of personality: Psychoticism (P), Extraversion (E), and Neuroticism (N). Eysenck comments that individuals have a high level of N and E, and high P scores (Eysenck, 1977, 58). He argues that these types of personalities are drawn to crime, possibly because they can be defined as neurotic extraverts; another possibility is that the perpetrators have a high level of depression, anxiety and violence (Eysenck & Gudjonsson, 1989; Canter, 2008). "The offenders commit crime because there is a relation between environmental situations and the nervous system" (Bartol & Bartol, 2008). Although this theory may be linked to biological theory, it

should be mentioned that Eysenck's theory is not saying that offenders are born; rather, he believes that a combination of environmental and neurobiological influences turn an individual into a criminal behaviour (Eysenck, 2013). Furthermore, this theory does not suggest that criminal behaviour is only innate; therefore, the effect of the central nervous system can interact with the environment (Eysenck & Gudjonsson, 1989). Therefore, it is possible to say that the perpetrators of genocide are rational and are influenced by others to commit crime. Rational choice theory makes a different point from social process theory, because some researchers have suggested that offenders are totally rational when they make a decision to commit a crime. This happens when various personal aspects such as greed, anger, jealousy, thrills, and vanity encourage an individual to commit crime (Siegel, 2014).

10. Case studies

10.1 Case-study 1 (Witnesses accounts)

Qualitative research is significant for exploring peoples' lives, lived experience, behaviours, emotions, feelings and social movements (Strauss, & Corbin, 1988). Eyewitness accounts can offer a context for what occurred and can help to provide a better understanding of genocide (Gutman, 1993).

10.1.2 Sample

In total, three participants took part in this study, of whom two are female and one is male. The participants in this study are from Kurdistan and were eyewitnesses to the Kurdish Genocide. The participants of this study observed many horrors during the genocidal campaign against the Kurds; they were incarcerated for around six months and saw the brutality unfold. Their ages range from 40 to 60 years.

10.1.3 Procedure

One participant had been interviewed previously (Qurbani, 2013). This eyewitness is the only survivor of the Anfal mass grave and he was able to talk to Qurbani face to face.

Two further participants were interviewed individually on Skype, as they are from Kurdistan and this was the only way to access them. The researcher told the participants that this project is about the psychology of genocide (Anfal), and that it is a humanistic project. Similar questions to those identified previously by Hardi (2005) and Qurbani (2013) were used to explore the eyewitnesses' experiences during the genocide (Appendix A). The Skype interviews were recorded.

10.2 Case study 2 (History of Kurdish genocide - Anfal campaign, 1988)

In early February 1988, the former Iraqi president, Saddam Hussein, ordered his cousin Ali Hassan-Al- Majid, known as Chemical Ali, to start a huge-scale military operation against the Kurdish people in northern Iraq. The operation was called Anfal (Hilterman, 2008).

10.2.1 What is Anfal?

Human rights watch (HRW) (1993) defined 'Anfal' as the spoils or booty of war. The word is the title of the eighth Chapter of the Quran. The Iraqi military regime adopted the name 'Anfal' in 1988 for its genocidal policy against civilian Kurds in northern Iraq. They did so because Anfal means 'the war against non-believers' which was carried out during the early Islamisation period. The Ba'ath regime justified the ideology behind its genocidal policy by adopting this Islamic name during the 1980s (Chak, 2007; Hilterman, 2008). It is estimated that nearly 182,000 Kurdish people were killed and 4000 villages destroyed during the aforementioned genocide in 1988 (Hardi, 2011).

This was a huge-scale military campaign involving national defence contingents (Afwaj al – Difa al – Watani), the pro-government Kurdish government militias known as Jash forces, the special commando forces (Quat al- Khasa), the emergency forces (Quat al- Tawari), and the Republican Guard (Quat al – Aras al- Jimhury) as well as Party Intelligence (Dairat al- Mukhabarat) and State Internal Security. All these forces were under Ali Hassan Majid's command (Resool, 2001).

The Anfal campaign took place in the prohibited areas in eight different states. The first stage began on 23 February 1988 with the intention of systematically killing and destroying civilians. The final Anfal ended on 6 September 1988 (Hiltermann, 2008). In this study, it is important to discuss the tactics used by the Ba'ath regime against the Iraqi Kurds during the eight processes.

10.3 The Camps

Returning to Violentisation theory, it is suggested that the perpetrators try to transfer the victims to prison (Winton, 2008). According to this view, during the Anfal operation people were sent to concentration prisons. For example, the first stage of the Anfal campaign resulted in the genocidal killing of many citizens, while the next stage involved concentration camps and mass graves when the Kurdish civilians were trucked to Dibs and Topzawa prisons (Black, 1993; Hardi, 2011). When the Kurdish civilians arrived at Topzawa, they faced hunger, sickness, rape, and beatings from the soldiers (Black, 1993; Chak, 2007). The guards psychologically tortured the victims. As a result, many children died. For example, Witness 1 said, 'there was no food and drink, the soldiers separated the children from their families and men were separated from women, people suffered disease, in particular children, their bones were dry, many of them died in the camps'. Therefore, it is possible to say that Saddam's soldiers psychologically and physically punished prisoners in the camps.

Another witness to the Kurdish genocide, Witness 2, said that the 'soldiers had chosen the most beautiful girls. Sadly, we never saw those girls who were taken out of the prison. For a while we were very sad that those innocent girls were abused and raped'.

Furthermore, Witness 2 spoke of the denial of the victims' humanity, as she

Saw that 'women were giving birth in front of everyone but no one would treat them, sadly, the new babies died inside the prison because of lack of healthcare. Sometimes the dead bodies were left

for two days; the soldiers treat the people as less than animals'. According to eyewitnesses, the camps were a part of the genocidal killing, such as psychological punishments of the victims and leaving dead bodies unburied in the concentration prisons.

Some studies support the eyewitnesses' accounts; for example, the second and third stages of Hilberg's model - Concentration and Extraversion – can be applied to the Kurdish genocide, as the victims are transferred to concentration camps where they are tortured and killed (Hilberg, 1985). Moreover, the third stage of Baum's theory, dehumanisation, may support the eyewitnesses' accounts of the camps, because the perpetrators see their victims as less than human (Baum, 2008). Although a number of children were harmed in the concentration camps, most of the prisoners were blindfolded and taken out into the desert to mass graves for genocidal mass killings (Witnesses 1, 2 and 3).

Image 1: shows the Topzawa Camp, where a large number of civilian Kurds were taken after being captured during the Anfal campaign.



(Hardi, 2005)

10.4 Mass graves

According to the present findings of the psychologist Baum (2008), "the perpetrators dig up the mass graves, burn the bodies, and try to cover the evidence" (p, 38). Thus, it could be said that Saddam's regime dug around 300 graves, each of

them containing 10 to 10,000 bodies; the graves were used for Kurdish men, women and children killed by Saddam Hussein's regime (CHAK, 2007; Kurdistan Regional Government UK Representative, 2011). Furthermore, the soldiers terrorised the prisoners at the edge of the pits in an organised way (Middle East Watch, 1993). For instance, Witness 3 acknowledged that 'there was a fearful situation when those guarding the pit took the victims into the pit'. Witness 3 said that his 'aunt died, in fact she was traumatised, this because of the fear'. The mass killing was very methodological because the victims were blindfolded and shot with "Kalashnikov" AK-47 assault rifles, and some of the victims were shot twice or more. It is known that, after the shooting, the bodies were covered over, as Witness 3 stated. In view of this point, the truth of Kurdish genocide is more likely to have been concealed. It is possible to say that the mass graves of the Kurds were related to the final stage identified by the psychologist Baum, who points out that the perpetrators want to cover the evidence that they have committed genocide in order to blame what has occurred on the victims (Baum, 2008). It is believed that this theory applies to the final process of the Kurdish genocide. Therefore, Saddam's regime tried to cover up the victims in the desert in order to deny that they killed thousands of Kurdish civilians in the early 1980s (Burng, 2006).

Image 2: illustrates a mass grave of Kurdish genocide in Iraq's southern desert



(CHAK, 2007, p, 40)

10.5 The psychological impact of the Kurdish Genocide (Anfal)

After the general amnesty, most of the women were released from prison and avoided the mass killings. They nevertheless suffered mental and physical harm and injury including rape. This had numerous psychological effects, including post-traumatic stress (PTS), physical illness, grief, depression and isolation.

10.5.1 Rape

"Genocidal rape is particular as well as part of the generic, and its Particularity matters" (Russell-Brown, 2003, p, 350). In this regard, it can be said that rape is a way of harming the victims. Eyewitness two said that the "soldiers had chosen the most beautiful girls. Sadly, we never saw those girls who were taken out of the prison". The rape of women under Saddam's regime can be recognised as part of genocidal killing. Eyewitness two, when asked about rape, was silent. This may be because it is more difficult for women to talk about rape. Some research suggests that trying to get women to talk about rape in some developing countries is dangerous (Kleinman, Das & Lock, 1997).

10.5.2 Post-traumatic stress (PTS)

In a study by Dworkin et al. (2008), it was illustrated that the prevalence of trauma has increased among the survivors of the Kurdish genocide. The prevalence of post-traumatic stress (PTS) disorder is still present two decades after the chemical attack on the survivors' area. The authors noted that PTS symptoms and poor social functioning were common among survivors. Therefore, the chemical gas led to increasing the psychological risk dysfunction (Dworkin et al., 2008).

10.5.3 Physical illness

Another effect of chemical attacks that can be found among the survivors is physical illness, which had a huge impact on the survivors. Some people died immediately while others suffered skin and eye burns, all as a result of the Saddam regime's

chemical bombing of Halabja City in 1988. It can be said that the effects on the survivors include cancers, birth defects, neurological problems, and infertility. More than 10,000 people were injured (CHAK, 2007).

10.5.4 Grief

Grief is another psychological effect that can be experienced by the survivors of genocide. A number of survivors cannot shake off the memory of the loss of a close person such as a parent, spouse, or family member. For a few people, this causes major unassimilated grief (Van der Veer, 1998).

“I saw the dead body of my kid, she was hungry and yearning for cucumber and she kept crying and asked me to get her a cucumber, I rushed and begged one of the guards to give a piece of green pepper. Then, the guard brought a sweet green pepper and threw it on sandy ground and smashed it with his boots in order to humiliate me and make me sadder. After that, I searched around and found a green plastic shoe and brought it to my child and my child didn’t realize that it was a shoe because she was ill. Then she started chewing the shoe; after a while she passed away and left me forever. So I have not bought and eaten cucumber since 1988”. Such testimony indicates that the genocide has caused grief to and had psychological impacts on survivors.

10.5.5 Depression and isolation

Depression, the inability to escape instances of change, may leave the survivors feeling alone and separated from the rest of their family and environment. Some of them may not be able to enjoy loving relationships with family members. In support of this view, Witnesses 2 and 3 said that “all of the women were depressed, because the children were separated from their families; the next night, soldiers came and took all the men for mass killing. Sadly, they never came back and, consequently, women started crying and screaming”. Furthermore, although most of the women in the camps were depressed, research shows high levels of depression after the amnesty. For example, Jabary (2010) reported that 76% of

the survivors of genocide suffered depression because they had lost their families.

11. Discussion

The main objective of this project was to investigate the psychology of Criminal Behavior and understanding the mind of offenders in several sections; the first section examined the literature on the theoretical models which helped to understand the mind of offenders. The second part analysed the theory of the perpetration of criminal behaviour and genocidal killing. The third section applied some of these current theoretical frameworks to review a real case of Kurdish genocide (Anfal), the 1988 genocide in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Baum (2008) and Santon (1998) classified the eight stages of the psychology of Genocide, they found that the offenders classify a symbolic step instead of a definition; thus, it is possible to say that these conditions are more likely to be linked to Hilberg and Winton’s conditions. Therefore, the perpetrators don’t need to harm all of society; the most important aspect is to classify and symbolise the specific group or ethnicity to be harmed. In relation to the Kurdish genocide, it is possible to consider that these previous instruments can be applied to the findings of the anfal campaign, as the victims were defined, classified and symbolised among the different ethnicities of Iraq, consequently leading to genocide (Black, 1993).

Previous theorists and researchers (e.g. Kelman, 1973; Hilberg, 1989; Waller, 2002; Winton, 2008; Baum, 2008) have investigated the psychology of Criminal Behavior and understanding the mind of offenders. While these theories differ with regard to the factors involved in genocide, they share a common belief. For example (Hilberg, 1989) suggested that offenders need to define their target group before genocidal killing. This study found that harming and genocidal slaughter of human beings caused by individuals who always followed the orders of leaders and authorities’ as well as dehumanization, hate, propaganda, Racism may consequences in genocide.

Further results of previous theories suggest that the

perpetrators are influenced by psychological and sociological factors such as pleasure-seeking, child abuse, models, and crowds. Researchers have recently suggested that all these factors have impacted on the offenders, encouraging them to commit criminal behaviour and genocidal killing. For example, psychoanalytic theory suggests a link to crime, because the offender's behavior is driven by pleasure-seeking and the impact of the 'thanatos' energy of death, which can psychologically force individuals to harm other people. Meanwhile, Borum (2004) and Bartol & Bartol (2008) added that the perpetrators are driven by the unconscious, as anxiety and child abuse in early childhood can lead to increased criminal behaviour and serious consequences (Siegel, 2014). Although there is a lack evidence to support this argument, it is known that the most infamous perpetrator of Kurdish genocide, Saddam, experienced child abuse and crime in his early childhood (Post, 2005). Thus, it can be said that the offenders of genocide are influenced by adverse childhood experiences.

However, the socio-psychological theorists disagreed with Freud's argument; they claim that the perpetrators and criminals are influenced by the environment, and that crime is highly influenced by family, media and observation actors. These factors can be transferred through social groups (Bandura, 1978; Bank, 2004; Loannou, 2008; Coleman & Norris, 2013). Moreover, in relation to socio-psychological theory, Le Bon (2009) found that the perpetrators are influenced by the group mind to commit crime. This may occur when a group of people share a common aim to harm others, and the individual's mind is controlled by a specific group. The case of Kurdish genocide (1988) and recent genocidal killing by Islamic State in Iraq and Sham (ISIS) of Christians, Shabaks, Yazidis and Kurds in Iraq are more likely to have occurred due to the impact of social training and the group mind (crowds) on the offenders to commit genocide (Human Rights Watch, 2014).

In addition, the findings of rational choice theories dispute the view that criminal behaviour is just a result of internal and social factors. For example, according to Eysenck there are several psychosocial

dimensions such as Psychoticism (P), Extraversion (E), and Neuroticism (N). High levels of N and E and high P can cause harm to people (Eysenck, 1977, p. 58).

The second aim of this project was to examine the case-study of Kurdish genocide to determine whether the previous findings apply to the 1988 Kurdish genocide. Interviews with eyewitnesses would provide a better understanding of the Psychology of Criminal Behaviour and understanding the Mind of Offenders, according to the UN definition of genocide, mental harm, serious bodily injury and attempts to remove children from their parents seem to be among the mental aspects at play and can be applied to the findings on the Kurdish genocide. For example, in the present case-study, it is known that the genocidal killing was inflicted by chemical weapons and "Kalashnikov" AK-47 assault rifles. Further findings illustrate some psychological dimensions involved in the genocide. For instance, it was found that some of the victims were killed at the edge of the grave. The eyewitness interviews revealed that the genocide was methodical; the victims were blindfolded and traumatised before being shot. Thus, genocide has aspects of trauma and fear.

In order to understand post-traumatic stress (PTSD) disorder, recent research (Dworkin et al., 2008) supported this finding from the current study and stated that the impact of chemical gas and shooting increased the trauma among the survivors of the Kurdish genocide. This demonstrates the societal cost of human rights abuse and shows that the survivors are at increased risk of psychological dysfunction years after the fighting has stopped (Dworkin, 2008).

Rape is another result of genocide. As one of the witnesses described, the most beautiful girls were chosen and taken out of the prison for punishment. But when the researcher asked eyewitness one about the occurrence of rape and sexual abuse in prison, she fell silent, as she had been in the prison. The key issue here is that trying to get women to talk about rape in Kurdistan can be difficult; indeed, some research has indicated that talking about rape

in some developing countries is dangerous (Kleinman, Das & Lock, 1997). On the other hand, the Anfal campaign took place in 1988; therefore, it is possible that the interviewee found it difficult to remember. Another possible reason is the fact that the researcher is male, which made it too difficult for the women to give information about sexual abuse.

The big issue found that during the interview that the genocide is consequently lead to physical disease, such as suffering cancer, birth defects, neurological problems, and poverty. These physical problems can hugely lead to die and injured victims of chemical attack everyday life (CHAK, 2007). Through the psychological problems, it is well-known that grief has great impact on the testimony survivors, because of the loss of a close relative might be given them sadness. As well as, isolation and depression found that might be significantly related to grief. Due to in fact it is found that 76% of the women survivors of Kurdish genocide suffered depression because their children and husband separated and killed over time at the binging of genocide. So the finding of this current is believed that the previous investigation of UN as can be linked to the current case study. It is therefor, separated members of group and harm the target group is can be consequently lead to leave psychological problem.

12. Conclusion and recommendations

The main aim of this study was to investigate the psychology of Criminal Behavior in order to understand the mind of offenders. Several models have focused on the factors involved in genocide, particularly those explaining the psychology that encourages offenders to commit genocide. The aim of these models was to analyse the motivational process behind genocidal killing, including factors such as, dehumanisation, hate, propaganda, racism, xenophobia, desire for social domination, and annihilation, as discussed in the previous section (1989; Waller, 2002; Winton, 2008; Baum, 2008; Santon, 1998). These models will provide a better understanding of how and why offenders commit genocide.

Although there are differences among the psychological and social theories of criminals and perpetrators, it is known that all these theories share a common belief. Perpetrators are impacted by internal and external processes. For example psychoanalytic theory focused on child abuse, pleasure-seeking and the energy of death (Thanatos) which may result in crime. Social theory focuses on environmental processes that cause individuals to become perpetrators through observation. Rational theory states that perpetrators are influenced by neuroticism, psychoticism and extraversion, which affect the nervous system and environmental circumstances. The theory of crowds focuses on the group mind which encourages individuals to immerse themselves in the group in order to harm others. As these theories all have certain drawbacks, it is strongly suggested that further research develop the fields of these theories; hence, further psychological aspects of the personalities of perpetrators might be investigated

Two significant psychological theories, by Hilberg (1985, 1989) and Kelman (1973) can be applied to investigate the psychology of the Kurdish genocide. With regard to Hilberg's first-step definition, the Kurdish civilians were defined as the target group and were taken to concentration camps; this led to Hilberg's final stage of destruction which took place when members of the target group were killed in the camps and beside the mass graves. Similarly, Kelman's two psychological aspects, authorization and dehumanization, encouraged the perpetrators to commit genocide as they obeyed the high authority's order to dehumanise the target group and see them as less than human. It is believed that these psychological conditions may help future researchers to better understand how and why genocide occurs.

13. Further recommendations are as follows:

There is a lack of research on the psychology of offenders in Kurdistan; therefore, it is strongly recommended that more research be conducted in order to prevent further genocide. Moreover, only a few eyewitnesses were interviewed in this study;

therefore, it is recommended that more participants be involved in studies of genocide in order to develop the field of qualitative research, as qualitative research is crucial to discover peoples' lives, lived experience, behaviours, emotions, feelings and social movements (Strauss & Corbin, 1988).

In addition, there is a lack of statistics about the offenders and victims of the Kurdish genocide; for example, the Iraqi court reported that more than 70 perpetrators of the Anfal Campaign have still not been caught and brought to justice; they live outside the jurisdiction and may still be sufficiently dangerous to commit genocide again (Rashid, 2006). Therefore, it is necessary to bring those offenders to justice. If this can be achieved, the researchers may benefit from psychological theories to investigate the psychological factors of genocide. On the other hand, the frustration of Kurdish citizens' needs, in particular, housing, water, and electricity supply, resulted in genocide in some circumstances; thus, the findings of this study should encourage the Kurdistan regional government (KRG) to meet villagers' basic needs. If this is done, genocide may never recur, as basic human needs are important for self-fulfilment (Maslow et al., 1998).

In view of the previous Kurdish genocide and continuing genocidal killing by ISIS in Iraq (Human Rights Watch, 2014), it is strongly suggested that the UN become involved to prevent this tragedy, and media, racism, hate, and propaganda should not be allowed to threaten people's lives. Individuals should be encouraged not to be influenced by or join terrorist groups and not to show blind obedience to authority. Otherwise, the impact of such social observation may encourage individuals to become perpetrators and become involved in genocide.

On the other hand, several psychological problems both pre- and post-genocide were presented, including rape, traumatic stress disorder (PTS) disease, grief, isolation and depression. The findings recommended that the consequences of genocide for the survivors should not be ignored. Further studies might also focus on the psychological

circumstances and events post-genocide. These recommendations may help professionals to publish research and present reports at conferences; consequently, psychological aid may help the victims of genocide. These results may help the UN to protect vulnerable groups from genocide.

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Appendices

Appendix A - Interview transcripts

Eyewitness Accounts of Kurdish Genocide (Anfal Campaign)

Witness 1

Interview with witness 1

1/6/2014- Chamchamal Region

Witness 1 is one of the witnesses to Kurdish genocide (Anfal). Through the interview she presented what happened to Kurdish victims during the operation. She was able to talk about her experience in the complexes, as she had been in Topzawa prison for more than six months. She had

escaped the mass execution. After the amnesty she looked after her surviving children alone.

The Interview

Q - Can you tell me your full name and age please?

A - My full name is (name provided) 56

Q/ Which village do you come from?

A - Qarahasan region

Q - Can you tell me when genocide (Anfal) came to your village?

A - On 9 April 1988, when Saddam's regime and Jash Militia used tanks and helicopters to destroy our village.

Q - What do you mean by Jash?

A - Jash were Kurdish traitors. They were insider spies who helped Saddam's regime at the beginning of the genocidal operation against citizens.

Q - How did genocide (Anfal) start in your region?

A - Genocide started with the destruction of our village and deportation of the civilian people in our area.

Q - Why?

A - Because the Baath regime and mercenaries told us that we should work for the regime like traitors; for a while we did not accept that decision, so that is why they destroyed our region; even my husband said to me that he did not accept being a traitor. Consequently, they deported us to the mountains; we had difficult living conditions; after two months we moved to another village, called Mamlaha.

Q - You knew Saddam's regime and Kurdish traitors were aggressive and tried to kill you! Why did you follow them from place to place?

A - "Because mercenaries told us that Saddam's Government had built houses for every citizen with electricity supply and water. This encouraged the

men to tell their family to follow them so we followed them to the complexes. But unfortunately they were lying"

Q - How was your journey? I mean did you make journey on foot or by car?

A - There were no cars, just walking; after three hours we arrived at Talabn Village; it was around sunset, so we were very tired and met another family there. Then we could not sleep at that time because we were very fearful. It was around 2 am, me and another lady had prepared our selves to make some bread for those people who were hungry and tired. At the beginning of our work, the regime started to bombard our area. By that time, I saw a cow being killed behind us. So, all of our family began to leave the village to find safer caves. After a day in the caves, Jash and military tanks came to our places to catch us. It was a terrible situation.

Q - Why?

A - Because Barq was a Jash (turncoat); he was getting on the tank and had said to us, he wants to start mass killing. But fortunately he did not do that anymore; they just took us into another village called Qaratamor. So we had been there for three days. And then all the family members were taken to Chamchamal city by Zel.

Q - What do you mean by Zel?

A - Zel was a large military van. They transferred all of us to Chamchamal region; when we were arrived there, the soldiers forced us to take everything out of our pockets, including all our IDs, notebooks and money. For that reason, I saw that they collected all the documents quickly and burned all of them. After that you could see that around a thousand buses came to our complex to transfer us to the terrible prison.

Q - Who was escorting your bus to prison?

A - Red hats - Arab Soldiers, they were members of

Saddam's military; they transferred all the families to Kirkuk City. Although we arrived at Kirkuk at night, we had no idea where they wanted to put us. After a few hours in Kirkuk, they transferred us to Topzawa.

Q - What do you mean by Topzawa?

A - Topzawa was a prison; it was the only hell on this earth.

Can you tell me how far Topzawa was from Kirkuk?

I think it was about three hours.

Q - How long were you in Topzawa Prison?

A - We were there for more than six months

Q - What did you see in Topzawa?

A - When I arrived at Topzawa prison, I saw so many circumstances there. First of all, there were 30 halls, and each hall included more than 110 people; the guards separated each group in each hall, we had very little space with a terrible life. Sadly, the guards tried to beat the women with cables, I saw that the men were blindfolded and then cars were brought to take them to the mass killings.

Q - Did they separate men from women or children from each other inside the prison?

A - Yes, we were separated from each other. On the third night the solders came and separated all the children from their families into other halls. This caused the women to scream and the children to cry; the next morning they brought the children back. In fact, the children were scared. This was because the solders threatened them to give them an injection. After they brought back the children they took all the men into another hall. I tried to tell the guardsman that is my husband behind the glass; he wanted to beat and kill me with his gun.

Q - How was the food and health?

A - There was not good food and drink, do you remember I told you Topzawa was a hell. They gave us a piece of dirty toast; we could not eat, because it was like a stone. Do you know we could not drink water because they gave us hot water? They psychologically and physically punished the prisoners.

Especially children, they were hungry and would soon die, because of lack of food and health. I saw that the children were dry bones in the holes.

Q - Did you see the solders abuse anyone?

A - Silent, and then said; not really, I did not see them abusing anybody in our hall, but I have heard that the guards beat and abused some women in other halls, but you could see the guards kicking and beating women with cable. People were suffering disease. Some people, in particular children, died in the halls because they were without their clothes and their bones were dry. This is the biggest crime Saddam did against civilian Kurds.

Q - Were there toilets for the prisoners?

Never, there was no toilet for us. We had a terrible situation, there was just a room people used as a toilet, and it was very dirty. Just prisoners would clean it. They looked on us as animals.

Q - How did you escape from the prison?

A - When the regime announced the amnesty we were taken home, I and my five children escaped with some of the other families who had been in the prison, but sadly all the men were separated from us and ended up in mass graves. So since 1988 I have been looking after my children alone.

Witness 2

Interview with witness 2

2 /6/2014- Qara Hanjir/ Chamchamal

Witness 2 was one of the most brilliant witnesses of

the Kurdish genocide (Anfal). She experienced the Anfal operation. She had been in Topzawa and Dibs prisons since 1988. Witness 2 lost her husband and three children; she saw many circumstances in the campaign; she talked about some psychological aspects of the Kurdish genocide through her six-month experience in the regime's prisons.

The Interview

Q - Can you please tell me your full name and age?

A - My full name is (name provided), 53

Q/ Which village do you come from?

Qadi Karam Region

Q - Can you tell me when Anfal came to your village?

A - On 4 April 1988

Q –How did the genocide (Anfal) start in your region?

A - Anfal came to our village in the early evening when Kurdish traitors announced that we should come to Qochali road the following afternoon, at 1 pm. And also they told us not to go by the main road as we would be heavily bombarded. So my husband said to us, let's go, we should be there, because he had thought that the regime honestly promised to keep us safe. All 18 families in our village went. When we arrived at the Qochali Road, we were shocked, because we saw that all the people had come from the different villages of Jabary region, I mean the regime collected all the villagers of the Jabari region.

They captured and collected all of us, you could not escape, because we were surrounded by military power, and then they brought many military vans to take us to Chamchamal camp, I remember that it was a terrible day, because you could see it was raining and stormy. You could see Saddam's soldiers beating people with their Kebles. At sunset they pushed us into the military vans.

Q - Who was escorting your van to prison?

A - Saddam's soldiers, they took us from the van to Topzawa Prison, we were sitting on each other in the van, it was a horrible time, because the vans were not covered and also it was raining and stormy. After we arrived at the Topzawa Prison, they took out people into the prison.

Q - How long were you in Topzawa Prison?

A - We were there for three days; it was a terrible moment, because there was no food and drink. After the three very difficult days, the soldiers brought the cars into the prison and they took all of the prisoners to Dibs.

Q - What do you mean by Dibs?

A - Dibs was a horrible prison, it was Hell

Q - How long were you in Dibs Prison?

A - I was there for around six months

Q - What did you see in Dibs Prison?

A - I saw many terrible things inside the prison that the soldiers did to the victims. For example, on the first night after arriving at Dibs, the prison wardens turned off the lights, children started crying! The soldiers' attitude was very bad, they used to call prisoners "dogs" and "saboteurs."

Q - Why?

A - I think they psychologically tortured people, they were not human, believe me I saw a lady who went mad on a dark night; you could see children crying and terrified at that time. Unfortunately the men were separated from us, they were blindfolded and trucked to the graveside for genocidal killings; believe me I met my husband at the end, he said to me keep your eyes on our children, because he knew that he would be killed with the other men. I think the soldiers took all the men for mass killing. That is why I saw my husband unhappy; and he left me forever.

And also on the next day, the guards came to the

hall to check people, and you could see that there were many dead bodies.

Q - Which group of people died?

A - The dead bodies in the prison mostly were children; I saw women give birth in front of everyone, so the new babies died inside the prison because of lack of healthcare; sometimes the dead bodies were left for two days. No one would treat them. So we usually collected 6 to 7 dead bodies together and covered them in the graveyard, even though there was no piece of cloth to protect them. We used to go to the graveyard with solders; it was to cover the dead bodies. It was a horrible situation.

Q - What was the most horrible situation that you saw in Dibs?

A - I saw a tragic story that I have never forgotten, that was the dead body of my kid: "when I was in prison with my 5-year-old kid, she was hungry and yearning for cucumber and she kept crying and asked me to get her a cucumber but I told her that I cannot get anything in this desert. Every day until night she kept crying for cucumber. Then I went out to the prison yard to ask the prison wardens to get a piece of cucumber for my child. At the same time I was watching as the guards were eating fruits and vegetables; then I rushed and begged one of them to give a piece of green pepper because it was green and looked like a cucumber to satisfy my child and stop her from crying, as my child was also ill. Then, the guard brought a sweet green pepper and threw it on sandy ground and smashed it with his boots in order to humiliate me and make me sadder. Then, the guards even prevented me from picking up the smashed pieces and started swearing at me and pushed me back to the prison, torturing, hitting and whipping me. After that, I searched around and found a green plastic shoe and brought it to my child and my child didn't realize that it was a shoe because she was ill. Then she started chewing the shoe; after a while she passed away and left me forever." So I have not bought and eaten cucumber since 1988

Q- How was your food and health in Dibs?

A-There was no drink and food, they gave us a piece of dirty toast, you could not eat it: when we gave the piece of toast to our children, they could not chew it, as a result, they vomited directly; it was very terrible for their stomachs, you could see children were suffering disease and they would slowly die. I think they were like birds in the hall, there was no clean water and food. It was a terrible life; all you could see was a hell.

Did you see the solders abuse anyone?

I had seen some black men come to the prison, because there were some young girls; so they had planned to separate the most beautiful girls as they had chosen some of them. Sometimes they used to come to choose young girls. Sadly, we never saw those girls who were taken out of the prison. We had no idea where the girls were taken. For a while we were very sad that those innocent girls were abused and raped.

For this reason, there was an old lady in the prison who advised the young girls to make their faces and bodies messy with ash, waste and dust of the ground in order to look old and ugly with the aim of not being selected by the prison guards for sexual abuse.

Q- Were there toilets for the prisoners?

A- No, there was no toilet for us. We had a terrible situation, there was just a room people used as a toilet, and it was very dirty. Just prisoners would clean it.

Q- What did people lose during the genocide?

A-People lost everything, we lost men and children as well as property, and nothing is left.

Q- How did you escape from the prison?

A-We escaped from Dibs Prison when Saddam

announced the general amnesty; we were taken to Arbat Region/ Kurdistan, they recorded all our names; they also stated that the Kurdish genocide had taken place.

Witness 3

Interview with Witness 3

Kalar, Garmian Region

Witness 3 is one of the strongest witnesses of the Kurdish genocide. He saw gunmen murder his mother and three sisters with other victims during the Kurdi massacre. Witness 3, who crawled out of a mass grave in Muthana province, presented his testimony against Saddam Hussein on the day of the trial. In the interview he talks about the circumstances of the victims in the pits. Although he had been in the prison, this project will discuss the specific experiences in the mass graves which he had seen during the mass killings. He predictably behaved like a hero. He told Human Rights Watch and journalists his testimony.

The Interview

Q - Can you tell me your full name please?

A - My full name is (name provided)

Q - Can you please tell me which village you come from?

A – Germian region

Q/ Could you tell me how Anfal came to your village?

A/ Actually the villagers, especially men who received promises from a mercenary boss who told them that Saddam's government had built houses with water and electricity supply for every citizen. But they were lying.

Let's start with your experience in the mass graves (pits)

Q - How was your journey to the desert (mass graves)?

A/ One morning, some cars were brought to the

front of Topzawa Prison; they looked like ambulance cars - green and white. After a fearful journey, we reached the shooting place, it was really horrible; I looked around and I saw nothing - just a barren desert, even the soil was not similar to Kurdistan. The fear grew more; why had they brought us to this empty desert? Why did they not bring us back to our homes? I had a fear that just by leaving us in this desert we would die because of lack of water and food. Besides, one question remained in my mind and that was; why was this government punishing us in that way? What was the guilt of those women, children and babies? I could not find any answer but the conclusion I reached was that they had brought us to this empty desert to kill us.

Q - Did they mix all the people together?

A - No, every group was kept beside their cars.

Q - Were there many soldiers around the area?

A - Not really. There was no military base in that desert, there were only some land cruisers patrolling the convoy. I think they were the same soldiers who came with us from Topzawa Prison. However, we were kept there without being given any explanations. After that they blindfolded our eyes with pieces of black cloth and took us back to the box. I noticed that the cloth was loose and easy to open. It was not difficult to guess what they were planning to do with us. We knew that blindfolding our eyes meant execution by firing squad.

Q - Did anybody remove the black cloth?

A - Yes, I did so.

Q/ Was it dark when you got out of the car for the second time?

A/ It was early in the evening and I could see clearly.

Q - If the people were blindfolded, how could they go close to the pits?

A - Well, there was not a long distance between the cars and the pits. We did not have to walk; we were just thrown into the holes as soon as we were out of the car.

Q - How deep were the pits?

A – Each pit was about two metres.

Q -What did you see at the beginning of the shooting?

A - I saw a horrible situation; before being pushed down to be shot, my aunty had died; in fact she was traumatized because of the fear.

Actually, people were dead before settling down in the mass graves. If there is a term in the vocabularies called deadly shock then that is what we suffered.

Q - Which part of the grave were you thrown into.

A - I was right beside the wall of the grave.

Q - Who was thrown next to you in that pit?

A - As always I was next to my mother and sisters, we were all shivering from fear. I remember I saw a soldier go back to the car and bring the dead babies and throw them into the pits.

Q- Was he carrying both of them together?

A - No, he was throwing them one by one. He could do it that way because the vehicle was close to the mass grave.

Q - How many soldiers were around?

A - There were two of them guarding the pit. There were also some others who took the action of bringing down the victims and pushing them into the pit.

Q - What type of gun were they carrying?

A - “Kalashnikov” AK-47

Q - Which way did they carry their machine guns?

A - Firmly with both hands, one was on the trigger and the other hand was used to point the gun at us.

Q - Were the two soldiers’ faces covered?

A - No, they were only wearing helmets.

Q - Did you look at the soldiers before the shooting started?

A -Yes I did.

Q - May I ask you to describe the shooting?

A - It was a very fearful sight. Imagine that there is somebody standing over your head and wants to hit you with a stick or a stone; how frightening would that be? But what about watching barbarian soldiers with machine guns? Over and above we were piled in a pit with no chance to escape.

Q -How long did the process of shooting last?

A - When they finished the first rifle they took a new one, and thus the process was repeated twice.

Q - My dear Taimur, I know how painful the shooting process was, but as a witness you will do a great favour to the history of our nation if you tell us the full story.

A - The first bullet hit my mother’s head, her white head-cover flew in the sky, and then blood gushed out over her face. The next one hit the cheek of sister Lawlaw, she fell motionlessly. My other sister Snur raised her palm as if to protect herself from the bullets but she was shot through her little hand. Consequently, the blood burst out and she collapsed. I could see that the woman was in great

pain, she was begging my mother to help her!

The bullets were faster than the rain's drops; within less than a minute the whole group was piled over on top of one another. In an unconscious move I got up and attacked one of the soldiers, caught him from his belt and asked him to stop shooting. I held him very tightly but when he raised his head I saw his eyes were full of tears. He stopped for a while until the other soldier shouted at him, and then he threw me back to the pit. Once more the other one ordered him to shoot at me and he did.

For the last moment I saw him, he was still crying. Due to the extra shots, I also collapsed. I felt one bullet penetrate my back, but I found myself alive. I raised my head a little and could see nobody around, and then I removed the sand from my body, had a better look and could see the soldiers were gathering in front of the headlights of their cars. They were getting ready to leave but I collapsed once more, most probably due to the amount of blood that I lost. I came back to life for the second time. I heard the bulldozers were roaring. They were covering the mass graves with sand.

I was conscious enough to realize that I had one last chance to survive, to run away for a long time, I arrived at an Arabic family's home; they were shocked to find me in Kurdish dress at midnight. They gave me good care. I was there for two years and then went back to Iraqi Kurdistan.