

# The Turkish Presence in Iraq

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YURTDIŐI TÜRKLER VE AKRABA  
TOPLULUKLAR BAŐKANLIĞI

# THE TURKISH PRESENCE IN IRAQ

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# THE TURKISH PRESENCE IN IRAQ\*

**T**his report is the second part of the project entitled "The Study of the Turkmen Profile in Jordan, Palestine and Iraq" supported by The Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Culture, Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB). The findings presented here are based on a literature review and two large scale field studies conducted in eight provinces in Iraq out of eighteen including Baghdad, Kirkuk, Nineveh, Erbil, Najaf, Karbala, Wasit, and Saladin. In addition to the literature review, archival research was also conducted at libraries in Baghdad and Kirkuk. During the interviews and focus groups semi-structured question sets were used. However, not only Turkmen families living in different regions, but also academics and officials of civil society organizations participated in the interviews. The report was completed as a qualitative and descriptive study based on the data from primary sources collected through the interviews and the data from the secondary sources through literature review. Through this contribution to the literature, this work will serve as a basis for those researchers and academics who would like to examine the topic of Iraqi Turks.

Turks first arrived in the region known as Iraq in 674 with the army of Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad, who was sent to Khorasan by the Umayyad Caliph Muawiya.<sup>1</sup> Turks have been living in Iraq for more than a thousand years, they ruled states and *beyliks* (principalities) that they founded there over the course of 900 years. Therefore, Turkmen are one of the founding entities of Iraq, and reside in almost every province from Basra in the southernmost part of Iraq to Duhok in the far north. However, Turkmen started to face difficulties following the British invasion of Iraq in 1914 because they resisted the occupation along with the southern Arab tribes. As a result, the Turkmen were excluded from political representation in the Kingdom of Iraq, which was declared in 1921. However, when the League of Nations decided that the Mosul province (Mosul-Kirkuk) was to remain within the boundaries of Iraq in 1925, it can be said that the Turkmen have left political channels and focused more on protecting their identity. Despite the declaration by the Kingdom of Iraq in 1932 upon the country's membership in the League of Nations, stating that everyone living within the borders of Iraq is entitled to Iraqi citizenship and equal rights,<sup>2</sup> Turkmen were not able to enjoy their rights provided to them legally, for example the right to education in their mother tongue.

<sup>1</sup> This report was prepared in 2019 and first printed in 2023.

<sup>1</sup> DİA, "Irak" [Iraq], TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi [TDV Islam Encyclopedia], <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/irak-ulke#7-irak-turkleri> (16.10.2019).

<sup>2</sup> Declaration of the Iraqi Kingdom

Turkmens supported the new Republic established in 1958 with the removal of King Faisal II under the leadership of General Abd al-Karim Qasim, anticipating the end of their marginalization. In fact, Turkmens showed their support by participating in the processions to celebrate the first anniversary of the Revolution on July 14, 1959 in the city of Kirkuk. However, the Turkmen's celebrations ended in a massacre which lasted for three days. The Kirkuk Massacre of July 14, 1959 signaled that the oppression of Turkmens would continue during the republican period. Thus, 32 years after the Kirkuk massacre, another Turkmen massacre was carried out by the Baath regime in Altun Kupri. Turkmens who were subjected to massacres in 1920, 1924 and 1946 prior to the declaration of the Republic, were repressed and oppressed politically and socially after the declaration of the Republic.

The assimilation policies towards Turkmen went beyond the prohibition of education in the mother tongue within the scope of "Arabization policies"; and included;

- Replacing Turkish settlement names with Arabic ones,
- Renaming the Kirkuk Governorate as the "at-Tamim" Governorate,
- Carving the district of Tuz Khurmatu, where Turkmens are demographically preponderant, out of the Kirkuk Governorate and tying it administratively to Tikrit,
- Forcing Turkmens to migrate to southern provinces,
- Expropriating Turkmen lands and later distributing them to Arabs,
- Resettling Arabs from the southern provinces to the Turkmen regions by giving incentives (money, land, etc.),
- Prohibiting Turkmens from buying real estate in Kirkuk.

Although the Turkmens were the target of oppressive policies and massacres, they managed to preserve their "national identity" and continued their existence in their traditional lands. The provinces where Turkmen live predominantly are located in a 50 kilometer-wide strip from the north and west of Iraq to the south east and include Kirkuk, Mosul, Erbil, Saladin and Diyala. These provinces (with the exception of Erbil) in Northern Iraq named "disputed territories" are the most problematic regions of Iraq today. There are different figures on the population of the Iraqi Turkmens. According to the 1957 census that enumerated the people by ethnic and religious identities in Iraq, there were around 567,000 Turkmens among a population of 6.3 million.<sup>3</sup> Iraq's current population is approximately 39 million. Thus, the Turkmen population in Iraq is stated as three to three and half million through a projection of the 1957 census data. However, it would be wrong to say that all Turkmens have preserved their national identity. A part of the Turkmen population was assimilated as a result of the Arabization policy of Saddam Hussein and the Kurdification policy implemented following the formation of the de-facto Kurdish Region in the north of Iraq in 1991. It would be appropriate to say that the Turkmen identity was also affected by the ethnic and sectarian separation of Iraq in the post-2003 period. However, although it is not possible to give a clear figure regarding the population of Turkmens, significant populations of Turkmens are present in every province from the north to the south of Iraq.

<sup>3</sup> Soner Çagaptay, "Turkmen, the Soft Underbelly of the War in Northern Iraq", Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Policy Watch No. 735, March 27, 2003.





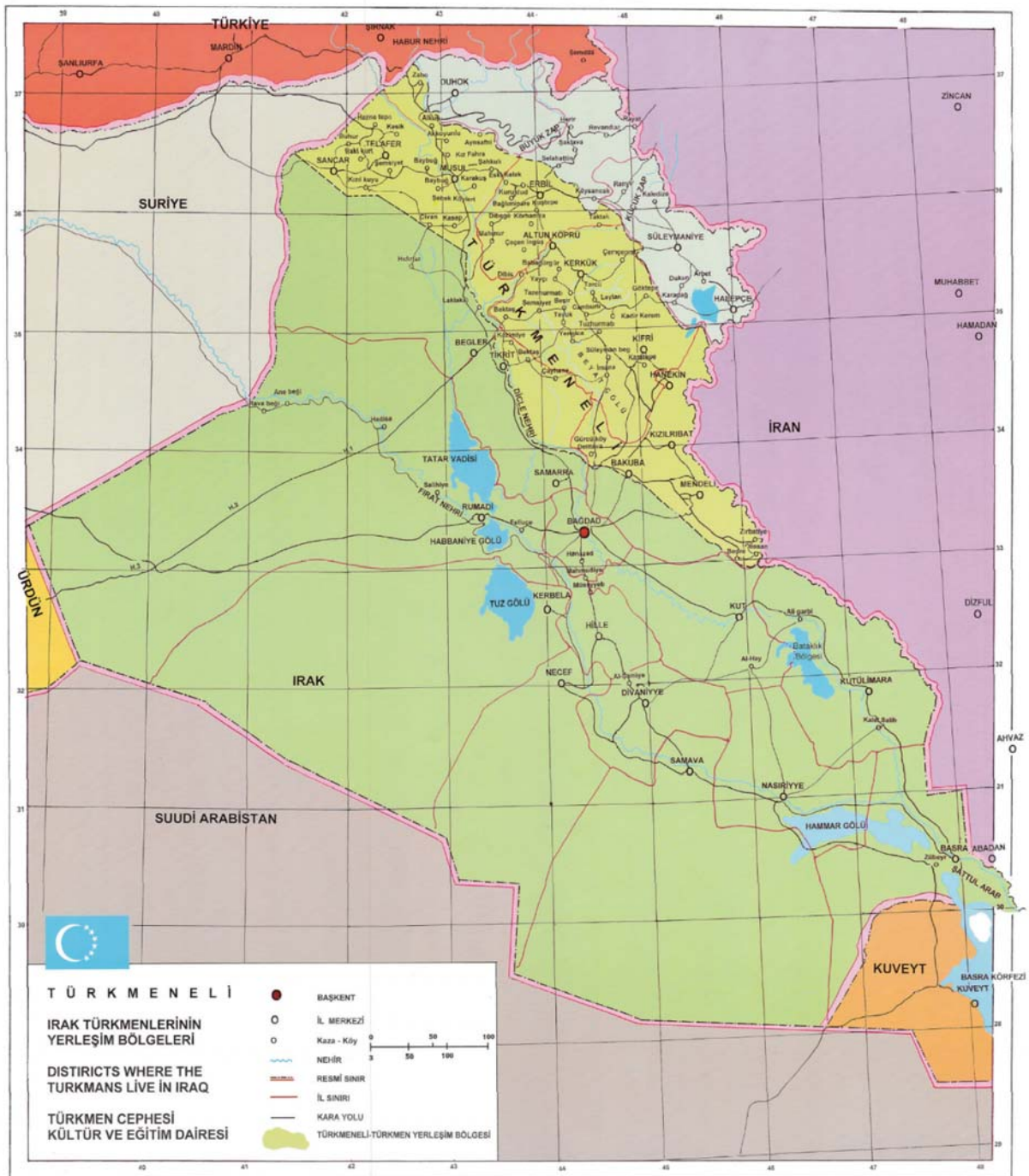
# THE TURKMEN SETTLEMENTS

1



## THE TURKMEN SETTLEMENTS

The Turkmen are one of the most ancient peoples of Iraq. Their existence within current Iraqi territories dates back to the year 54 of the Hijri calendar. The Turkmen were the rulers of the region from 1055 when the *khutbah* (Friday sermon) was delivered in the name of the Great Seljuk Sultan Tughril until the occupation of the British in 1918. It would not be wrong to say that the Turkmen, who were one of the founding elements of the newly established Iraqi State after 1918, had a presence and an influence in every part of Iraq. In this sense, it is possible to see the traces of



Turkmen existence and encounter a Turkmen population from Zaho in the northernmost part of Iraq to Basra in the south. Yet, it is possible to say that the Turkmen population is concentrated mostly on a strip of land starting from Bedre, in the east of Baghdad on the Iranian border, to Tel Afer in the north-west end of the country. Along this route, Turkmen inhabit mostly the provinces of Diyala, Saladin, Kirkuk, Erbil and Mosul. This land is called "Turkmeneli" (the land of the Turkmens) by the Turkmens.

On the side is the map of Turkmeneli - Districts Inhabited by the Turkmens in Iraqi prepared by the Iraqi Turkmen Front.

It is possible to state that the areas inhabited predominantly by the Turkmens have utmost strategic importance for Iraq. That about 40 percent of Iraqi oil reserves are located here is well known. The importance of the lands that Turkmens reside in is well understood when the fact that 96 percent of the Iraqi budget is based on oil revenues is taken into consideration. Furthermore, this zone constitutes a line of transition in Iraq administratively, politically and socially. As a result of the federal structure established in Iraq after 2003, the region became a buffer zone between territories administratively controlled by the Iraqi Kurdish Regional Administration (KRG) established in the north of Iraq and the Iraqi central government. After 2003, the KRG seized control over the region inhabited by the Turkmens which was outside of their constitutionally boundaries and this region gained the status of "disputed territories" in Iraq. Turkmen reside predominantly in 12 out of the 15<sup>4</sup> disputed districts. Not only is this region, referred to as "disputed territories", the administrative transition zone between the Iraqi central government and the KRG, to date, it is still not determined whether these territories will be controlled by the Iraqi central government or the KRG. In fact, this zone was within the territories under the control of the Iraqi central government administratively; it became disputed following the KRG's takeover after 2003 as part of their expansionist policies. Most of the territories came under the threat of ISIS since it emerged in 2014. After the completion of the fight against ISIS, the Iraqi central government gained control over the region by a military operation launched on October 16, 2017 and did not allow the KRG to regain control in the post-ISIS period. However, the KRG's claims and pressure over these lands continue.

This is a political problem as well as an administrative dispute between Erbil and Baghdad. Considering the federal structure in Iraq, there is a struggle over the distribution of political power in the provincial councils of these regions as well as in Iraqi general elections. For this reason, there is political contention among the Turkmens, Arabs, Kurds and even minority groups living in these regions. Furthermore, these lands that the Turkmens mostly inhabit, also known as "disputed territories" can be considered as a social transition zone between the Kurdish majority in the north of Iraq and the Arab majority in central and southern Iraq. For this reason, the region has been one of the focal points of ethnic strife and even conflicts after 2003. In addition, the fact that minority groups such as Christians, Shabak, Yazidi and Kakai also live here makes the Turkmen region the point of intersection between Muslims and members of minority religions as well as an ethnic transition zone. Another feature of the areas inhabited by Turkmens is that it is a sectarian transition and intersection line among the Muslims in Iraq. In other words, this region is the primary territory

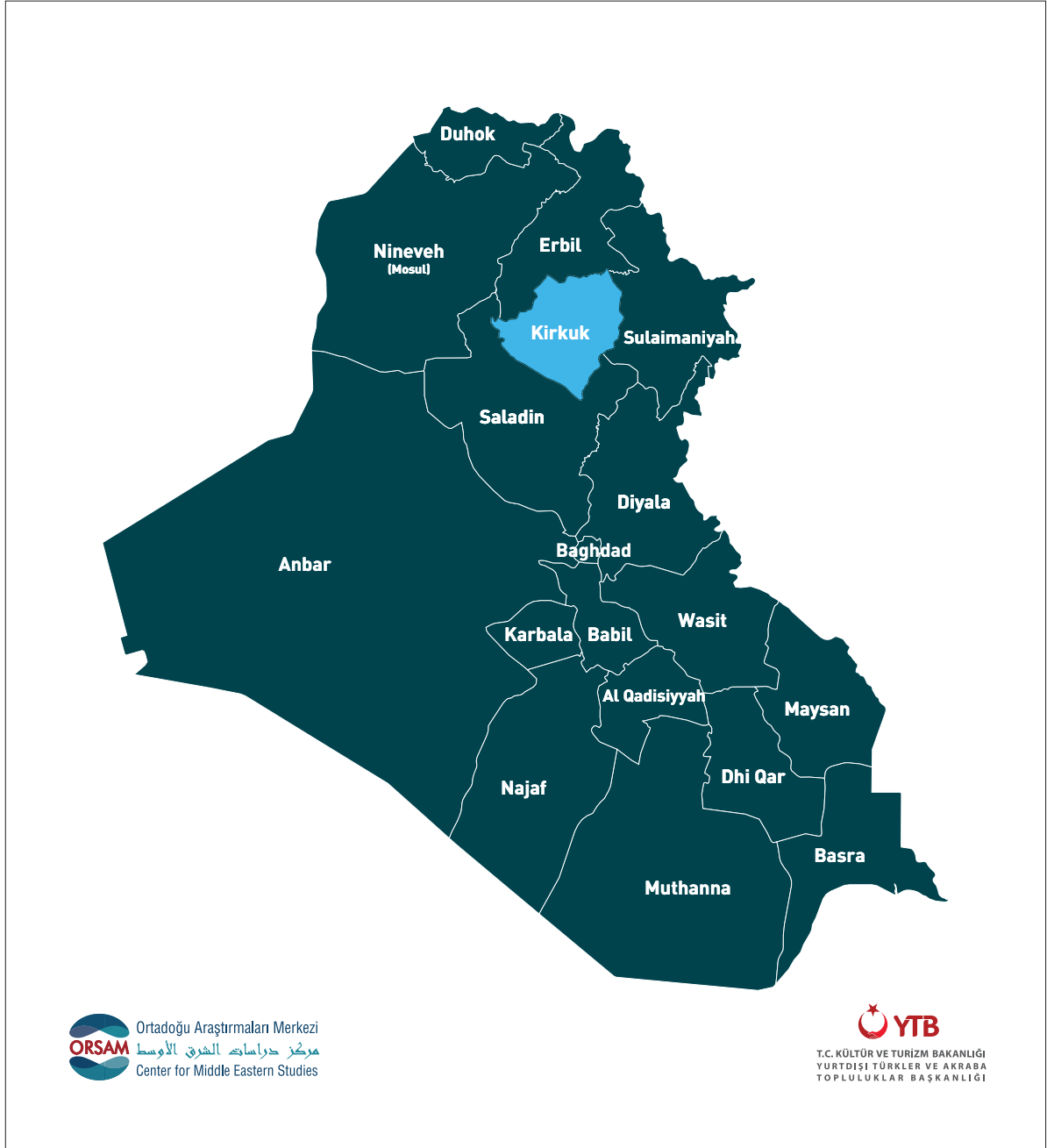
<sup>4</sup> According to the United Nations Report prepared in 2009; districts of Sinjar, Tel Afer, Tilkeyf, Shekhan, Akre, Al-Hamdaniya of Nineveh (Mosul) Governorate, district of Makhmur of Erbil Governorate, districts of Kirkuk, Dibis, Daquq, and Hawija Kirkuk Governorate, Tuz Khurmatu district of Saladin Governorate, districts of Kifri, Khanaqin, Baladrooz (Mandali) of Diyala Governorate has been declared as the disputed territories between the Iraqi central government and the KRG. Turkmen constitutes the majority of the population in all disputed territories except in Makhmur of Erbil and Hawija of Kirkuk.

where Shiite-Sunni identities come together and interact in Iraq. The land stretching from Tel Afar to Mandali, with the exclusion of the capital Baghdad is the main area where Shia and Sunni identities get together and intense interactions take place. In addition, since Shia identity is represented by the Turkmen mostly in this region, the Turkmen population has been directly affected by every positive or negative development in Iraq. In fact, the Turkmen regions have become one of the main target points of terrorism in Iraq, and most of the ethnic and sectarian conflicts took place within Turkmen settlements. When the memories of the territories targeted and controlled by ISIS, which emerged in 2014, come to mind, the sensitivity and strategic importance of the Turkmen homeland becomes even more apparent.



## KIRKUK GOVERNORATE

The Kirkuk Governorate, consists of 4 districts, namely Markaz Kirkuk (the central district), Dibis, Daquq and Hawija. Kirkuk is known as a "miniature of Iraq." Turkmen live predominantly in three of these districts except Hawija. It can be said that more than half of the population of the Kirkuk Governorate live in the Kirkuk central district. After that, the most populous districts are Daquq and Dibis. The majority of the Turkmen population resides in the Kirkuk central district, which is divided into two by the Hassa stream. Within the Kirkuk District, Turkmen live mostly in Tisin, Musalla, Korya, Baghdad Road, Sarıkahya, Şaturlu, Beyler, Piryadi, Almas, Arafa, Bulak, Çukur, İmam Abbas, Cirit Square, Çay, 1 June and Beşiktaş neighborhoods. Turkmen live dispersed in other quarters as well.



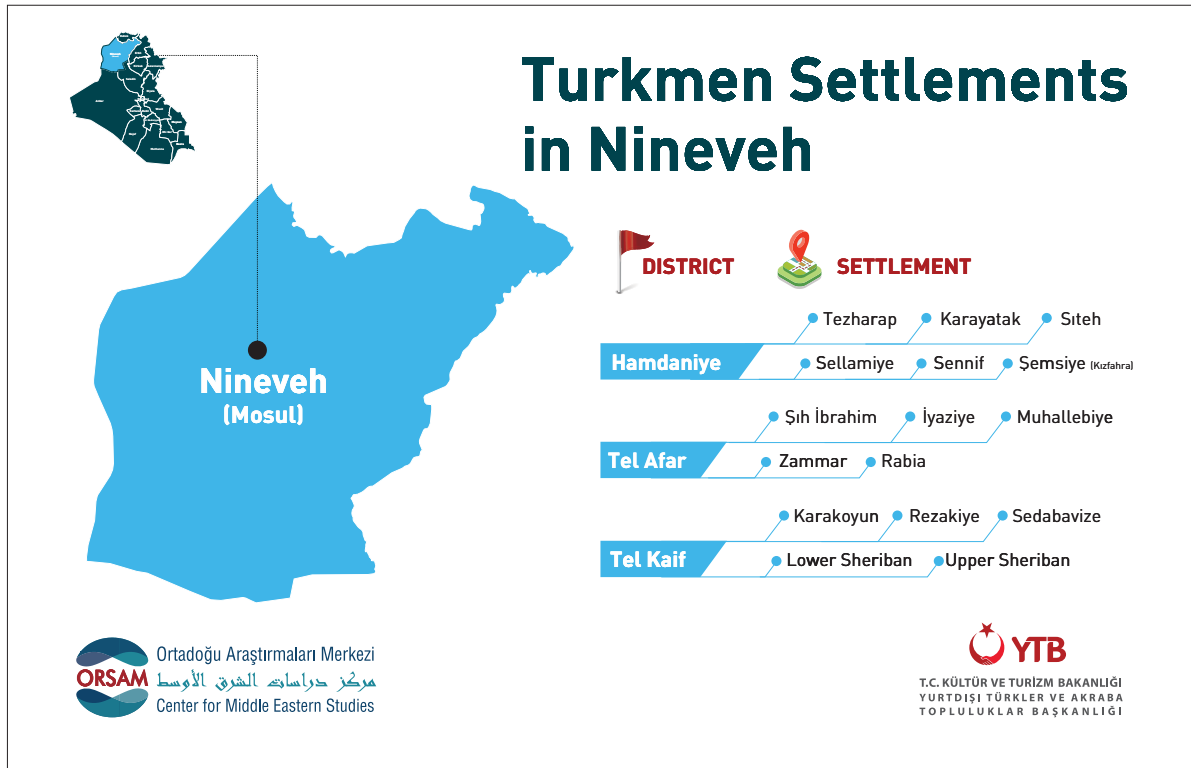
Nonetheless, Turkmen constitute the majority of the population in Tisin and Daquq, known as the agricultural centers of Kirkuk. In addition, Turkmen are the majority in Tazehurmatu (Taza Khurmatu), one of the sub-districts of the Kirkuk District. In fact, almost all of the residents of central Tazehurmatu are Turkmen. However, there are Arab villages around Tazehurmatu as well. As a result of the settlement policies of the Kurds, Daquq's population became half Turkmen and half Kurdish. In Altinköprü (Altun Kupri), one of the subdistricts of Dibis District, Turkmen have become a minority. On the other hand, there are about 10 villages around Kirkuk where a substantial population of Turkmen reside. Among them are Türkalan, Yayçı, Çardaklı, Kızılyar, Kümbetler, Bulova, Beşir. There are also Christian Turkmen who reside in Kirkuk, especially in the Şaturlu, Almas and Arafa districts.





## NINEVEH (MOSUL) GOVERNORATE

The Nineveh (Mosul) Governorate consists of nine districts, namely Mosul, Tel Afar, Sinjar, al-Ba'aj, al-Hamdaniya, Tel Kaif, al-Shikhan, Hatra and Akre. Although there is an Arab majority in Mosul, there are also substantial Turkmen and Kurdish populations there as well. On the other hand, religious minorities such as Shabak, Yazidi and Christians have also settled in Mosul province. While the Mosul central district houses the largest population of the province (approximately one million seven hundred thousand), Tel Afar, a predominantly Turkmen city, has the second largest population. Tel Afar's population as of November 2008 is 395.150.<sup>5</sup> In the Nineveh (Mosul) Governorate, Turkmen



<sup>5</sup> Serhat Erkmen, "Unutulmuşluğun Karanlığından Umudun Aydınlığına Uzanan Bir Türkmen Kenti: Telafer", [Talafer: A Turkmen city arising out of the darkness of oblivion into the light of hope] Ortadoğu Analiz, January 2012, No 5, p. 9.



live mostly in the districts of Mosul and Tel Afar, and in the south of the AL-Hamdaniye and the Tel Kaif district. In addition, they reside in other districts as well. Substantial numbers of Turkmen live in subdistricts of Reşidiye, Şerihan, Karakoyun, Sedabavize within the district of Tel Kaif, the sub-districts of Tezharap, Şemsiye, Sellamiye, Karayatak of AL-Hamdaniya district, and in Sennif, and Iyaziye, Muhallebiye, Zammar and Rabia within the Tel Afar district.

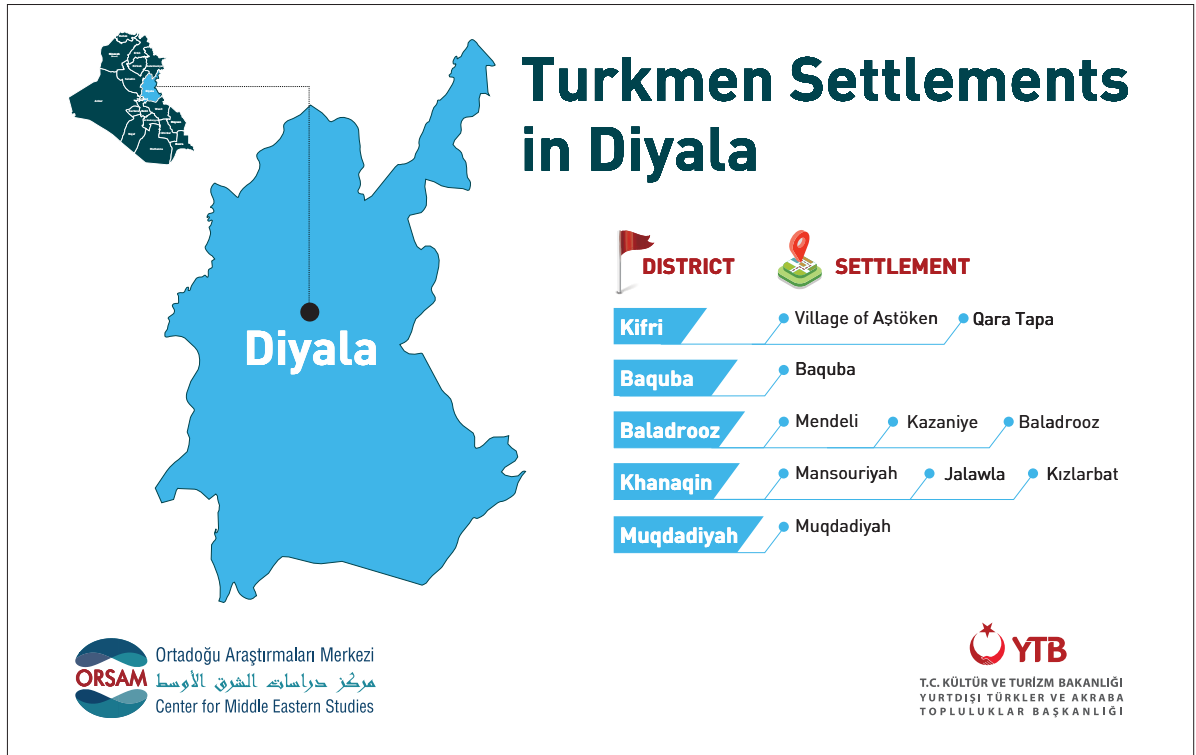
At this point, Tel Afar deserves a distinct paragraph. First of all, it is important because Tel Afar is the closest Turkmen settlement to the Turkish border. Although the central Tel Afar population is entirely Turkmen, Arabs and Kurds also reside in the sub-districts of Rabia and Zammar. The insular nature of the community in Tel Afar has created a specific "Tel Afarian" identity. Although there is a tribal structure in Tel Afar, there are Shites, Sunnis and even Alevis in each tribe. Although the events in the region after 2003 and the US operations in 2004 and 2005 upset the balance of Tel Afar for a while, the city had started to regain its old balance. These developments caused changes in the

population of Tel Afar with many families having to flee the city during the intense operations. The number of families immigrating from Tel Afar is approximately 4,500 according to the commission established in the district center. Considering the tribal structure of Tel Afar, it can be said that at least 30 thousand people left Tel Afar.<sup>6</sup>



## DIYALA GOVERNORATE

The majority of the population of the Diyala Governorate is Arab, though a substantial number of Turkmens and Kurds also reside there. The Diyala Governorate has six districts, namely Khanaqin, Kifri, al-Khalis, Muqdadiah and Baladrooz, and its provincial capital, Baqubah. However, Kifri is



<sup>6</sup> Ibid.



currently under the control of the regional administration in the north of Iraq, since Diyala is on the provincial border of Sulaimaniyah. It is known that approximately 700 Turkmen families live in Kifri.

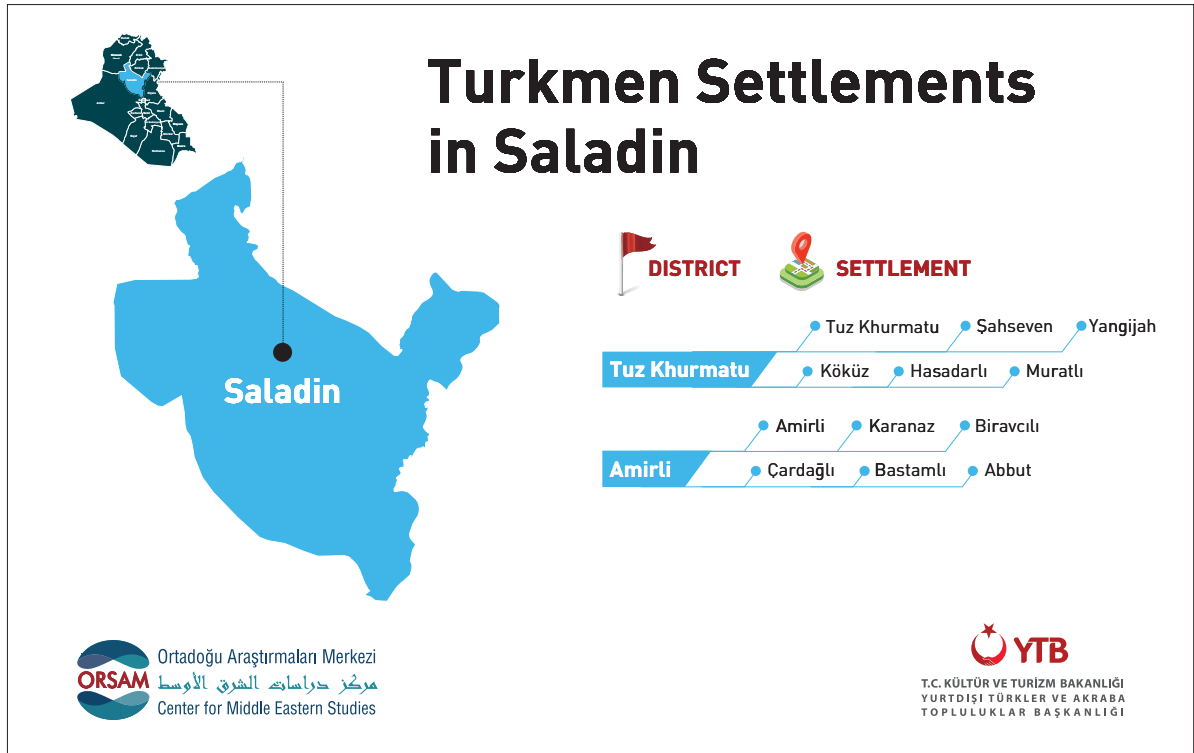
While the Diyala province includes Baqubah, which was considered the center of resistance for a period, the claims of the regional administration in the north of Iraq, especially on Khanaqin and Kifri, have fueled regional conflicts. Despite having a Sunni majority population, Diyala was one of the regions where the Shiite-Sunni conflict was most intense. Since Turkmen in the district live in dispersed groups, they were stuck in the middle of conflict zones and were directly affected even though they were not a party to the conflict directly. On the other hand, although there is a considerable Turkmen population in the al-Bayat region of Diyala, it can be said that the Turkmen living in this region were Arabized by the regimes in the past, especially during the Saddam Hussein era. Tribal loyalty seems to be strong in the Turkmen community living in Diyala, which can be explained by the fact that Diyala has an Arab majority population and its tribal structure has had an influence on Turkmen.



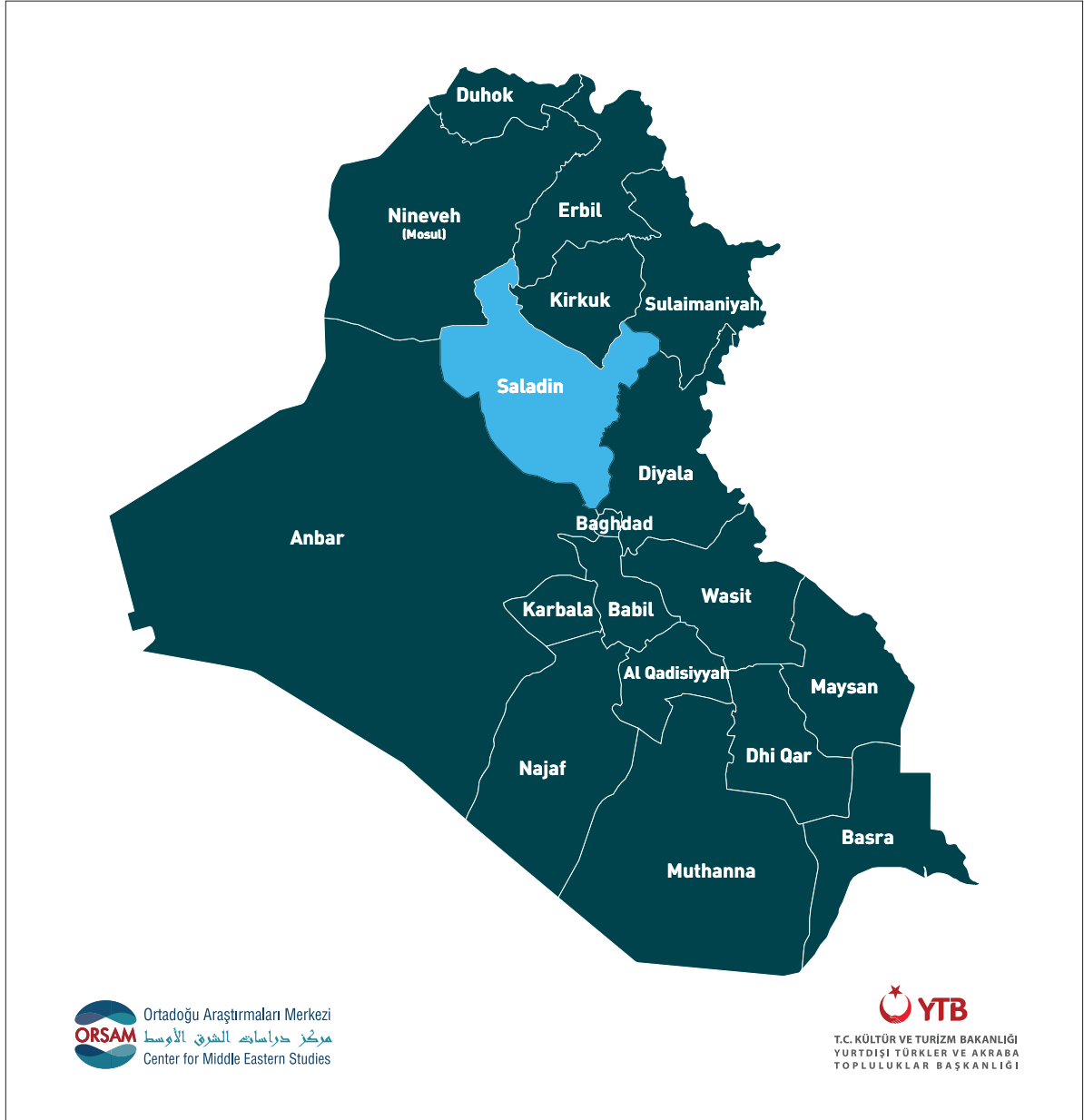


## SALADIN GOVERNORATE

The Saladin Governorate, which is located in the north of Baghdad, has 10 districts, namely Baiji, Tikrit, al-Daur, Balad, al-Shirkat, Samarra, Dujail, Faris, Tuz Khurmatu and Amirli. The most important settlement where Turkmen live is Tuz Khurmatu district. Turkmen also live in villages in the Tuz Khurmatu and Amirli districts and in the Suleiman Beg sub-district.<sup>7</sup>



<sup>7</sup> For further info see, Serhat Erkmen, "Tuzhurmatu Türkmenleri: Bir Başarı Hikayesi" [Turkmen of Tuz Khurmatu: A Success Story], November 2009, Ortadoğu Araştırmaları Merkezi (ORSAM), ORSAM Report No: 6, C.J. Edmonds, "Kürtler, Türkler ve Araplar: Kuzey-doğu Irak'ta siyaset, seyahat ve inceleme (1919-1925)" [Kurds, Turks, and Arabs: Politics, Travel and Research in North-Eastern Iraq, 1919-1925] Trans. Serdar Şengül – Serap Ruken Şengül, Avesta Yayınları İstanbul, 2003, p. 349-369.



Tuz Khurmatu is a district with a population of 180 thousand, where Turkmen, Arabs and Kurds live together. It consists of Süleyman Beg, Kadir Kerem and Yengice sub-districts together with the central sub-district. While the populations of Bastamlı and Yengice sub-districts are almost entirely Turkmen, in Tuz Khurmatu center, Turkmen constitute the majority among Arabs and Kurds. Even though it is administratively within the Saladin province, the people of Tuz Khurmatu have never felt they belonged to the place, because until 1976 Tuz Khurmatu was a district of Kirkuk province and was only later connected to a newly established Saladin (Tikrit) province. However, thanks to geographical proximity and kinship relations between Tuz Khurmatu and the people of Kirkuk, the bond between Kirkuk and Tuz Khurmatu continued. There are still administrative problems due to the border change made by the Saddam regime in Tuz Khurmatu district in 1976.



## BAGHDAD GOVERNORATE

Baghdad was under Turkish rule from 1534, when Suleiman the Magnificent ended Safavid rule there, until 1918. Therefore, many Turks had settled in Baghdad. Many Turkmen who had served in the Iraqi state after 1918 made Baghdad their home and stayed there. Today, Turkmen mostly live in the Adhamiyah region, but there are Turkmen families residing in almost all parts of Baghdad. While the number of Turkmen in Baghdad is said to be in the hundreds of thousands, it is known that many of them have lost their ethnic identity and were Arabized. History shows that Kardeşlik Ocağı



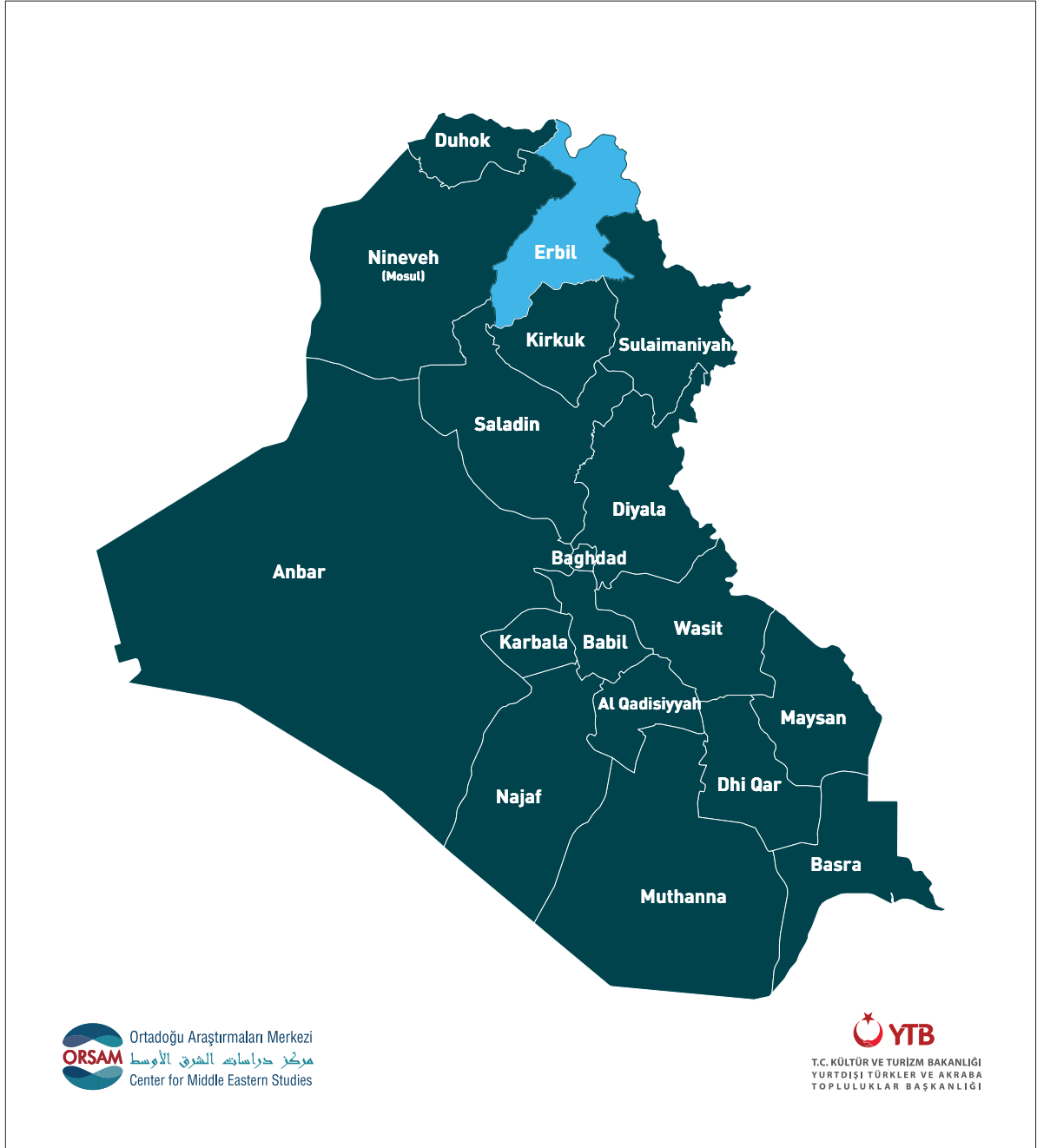
(Brotherhood Club), the first Turkmen organization in Iraq, was established in Baghdad in 1960. However, it is seen that Turkmen have first lost their language and then their identity due to reasons such as Baghdad being the capital, the pressure of Saddam Hussein, and Arabic being the dominant language. Nevertheless, according to calculations based on the number of votes received by Turkmen candidates in Baghdad in 2010 elections, it is possible potentially to talk about 20 thousand Turkmen who have preserved their ethnic identity.





## ERBIL GOVERNORATE

The Erbil Governorate is a city where many Turkmen live even though it is within the boundaries of the KRG. Turkmen live mainly in the Erbil city center. Until 2006, Turkmen were residing in all of the approximately 700 houses in the three neighborhoods (Tophane, Tekke and Saray Quarters) within the Erbil Fortress and until the 1990s, Turkmen made up the largest proportion of the population in the city center of Erbil. However, after Saddam Hussein's operations in northern Iraq attacking the villages along the border, the population of Erbil's villages migrated to the city center. The Kurdish population in Erbil city center increased further after it was captured by the KDP as a result of the conflict between the KDP and PUK in 1996.



In 2006, the Erbil Fortress was completely evacuated, residences were abolished and the Turkmen were dispersed to various neighborhoods of Erbil city. The Turkmen population in Erbil is estimated to be close to 300 thousand. Although there is no longer a large neighborhood where Turkmen live collectively after the castle was evacuated, currently Turkmen mostly live in the Taji, Mareke and Üç Tak neighborhoods around the castle. It has been observed that the Turkmen living in the city center gradually started to settle in the villages outside of Erbil. It can be stated that the Turkmen, whose income levels are generally low, have moved out of the city center, as Erbil has shown a significant development especially in the last 7-8 years and life in the city has become more expensive as a result.





## OTHER REGIONS

As stated before, it is possible to encounter a Turkmen population in almost every province of Iraq. It is known that the first arrival of the Turks to Iraq was in 674, when Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad settled around 2 thousand Turkish horsemen around Basra. After this process, the current Iraqi territories came under the rule of the Turkish states leading to an increase in the Turkish population. Today, a portion of the Turkish population in Iraq constitute the indigenous people of the regions where they have historically settled, while the rest are those who had migrated or were displaced as a result of events in Iraq and those who had settled in different regions because of the assimilation and forced migration policy of the government in power. It is known that the term Turkmen started to be used to refer to the Turkish population in Iraq after the 1950s. Especially during the Saddam Hussein period, as a result of the Arabization policy initiated in and around Kirkuk, the Turkmen were exiled and subjected to forced migration. As a result of this, it is known that the Turkmen population has settled in the provinces in the south of Iraq. However, it is not possible to obtain sound data on the number of the Turkmen population who settled in the south of Iraq as a result of these policies throughout the years.

On the other hand, considering that current Iraqi territories have been under the rule of Turkish states for about 900 years, it would not be wrong to say that the Turkish presence in almost every region of Iraq has transformed into a natural population. For example, though it is known that a large number of Turkmen live in Baghdad and Kut (Wasit), they have been very much integrated with the settled population. Although today there are no regions left in Baghdad where Turkmen are concentrated in, they reside in Kut, in Aziziye and Baghdad Road. Despite this, the Turkmen population in Baghdad is said to be in the hundreds of thousands, and it is known that Turkmen have historically lived in Shahab, Cemile, Talibiye, Hay el-Ur, Palestine Street and Azamiye. However, the ratio of the Turkmen population in Baghdad, which has a population of approximately 8 million as of today, has decreased considerably and Turkmen have been integrated with the dominant Arab majority in the city.

In addition, especially after 2003 there are also Turkmen who were displaced as a result of the events in Iraq and who ended up settling in the regions they migrated to. In particular, more than 70 percent of the Turkmen population had to flee in 2004-2005 due to U.S. operations from the city of Tel Afar, which is within Mosul province and had a population of 510 thousand in the pre-ISIS period. Those Turkmen who were displaced from Tel Afar could not return home for a long time due to the sectarian conflict in 2006. Some of the Turkmen population, who fled to the south of Iraq during this process, preferred to stay in these regions. It is known that there is a large Turkmen population who have settled in provinces of religious significance such as Najaf and Karbala. Although some of the Turkmen population that left Tel Afar returned to their homeland, the emergence of ISIS in 2014 and its control over the regions where Turkmen live, especially of Mosul, created a new wave of displacement for Turkmen. The majority of the population of Tel Afar, which is one of the regions ISIS had captured, has migrated. It is known that almost all of the 510 thousand of the population of Tel Afar fled between 2014, when ISIS established territorial control in Iraq, and the end of 2017, and only 10 to 12 thousand people were remaining in Tel Afar just before the rescue operation started. Some of the Turkmen of Tel Afar migrated to the south of Iraq (especially in Najaf, Karbala, Babil), some settled in the northern part of Iraq (especially in Duhok), and others came to Turkey via Syria. The Turkmen population who fled to the south of Iraq due to ISIS approaching was 200 thousand during its peak. Most of this internally displaced Turkmen population first settled in the Hussainiyas (the Shiite mosque complex) between Najaf and Karbala, then settled in the city centers after finding employment. Some of the Turkmen (approximately 17 thousand families according to the Tel Afarian authorities<sup>8</sup>) returned to their homes in Tel Afar after it was liberated from ISIS. However, this has caused large Turkmen families to breakdown since some of the families chose to stay in the regions they fled to. Most of the people of Tel Afar have not returned to their homes due to fear of finding themselves with another plight and therefore needing to settle in the regions where they have taken refuge. Although this situation causes an increase in the Turkmen population in a variety of provinces in Iraq, it changes the natural living space and region of Turkmen and weakens the Turkmen population in the main settlements.

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<sup>8</sup> Data obtained from the interview during fieldwork.







# THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF THE TURKMENS

# 2

## THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF THE TURKMENS

Although the Turkmen presence in Iraq has a very long history, the word Turkmen was not used much for the Turks in Iraq until the 1960s. Even the name of the first organization established by the Turkmen in Turkey is "Iraqi Turks." In this sense, it can be said that the identity of Turks in Iraq was suppressed and labeling Turks in Iraq as Turkmen instead of Turks aimed at weakening and even eliminating Turkish identity and assimilating them. However, the oppression experienced on their identity fueled the Turkmen to hold onto their identity, increased their commitment to Turkishness and their allegiance to Turkey, weakening other identities and modes of belonging. Their allegiance to Turkey has prevented the Turkish presence from being seen as one of the constituent elements of the country by the Iraqi regimes and caused their social and political exclusion. Despite the pressures of the regimes in Iraq, Turkmen did not rebel since they did not have a tradition of resisting authority and have instead become a closed community. Their insularity was an important factor in preserving the language, culture and ultimately identity of the Turkmen. Although Turkmen were able to adapt to the overall system, they developed a coping mechanism against the perception of a direct threat to the Turkmen identity from other ethnic groups. At this point, though ethnicity was mentioned from time to time in the expression of identity, the attachment to the land was highlighted. In other words, Turkmen came to identify ethnic identity with living space and their sense of owning the land and expressed their identity as "Kirkukis, Tel Afaris, Erbilites." The sense of belonging to the places they inhabit seems to trump all other identities of the Turkmen from time to time. Although an identity based on ties to the land has emerged among Turkmen, nevertheless, their most important characteristic has been their ability to unite under the roof of Turkmen identity when they perceive a direct threat from outside. Thus, despite the discrimination, exclusion, oppression and persecution of the Turkmen community by the various ideological and political currents in Iraq, the Turkmen identity has not been wiped out.

Turkmen's conceptualization of Turkishness and Turkism seems to be "equivalent to commitment to Turkey." In other words, Turkmen's demands to protect their identity caused the community to be viewed as "the other" by other Iraqis, since being a Turk was equated with being pro-Turkey. Thus, Turkmen could not construct their history in the new Iraq and the Turkmen history in Iraq continued along with Turkey. However, with the influence of its state-formation tradition, the Turkmen are a community with a high level of loyalty to the state, which is regarded as sacred in a traditional sense. Thus, Turkmen opposed the federal structure in the constitution in the post-2003 Iraq and supported the idea of the unitary state stemming from the widely held conception of authority as being an indivisible whole within Turkish society. Religious belief in Turkish communities also emerges as an indicator of this. Similarly, the religious belief of the Göktürk State was monotheistic with a reference to a single authority. Another example of belief in a single authority emerges in empires. Loyalty to the ruler is very strong in Turkish empires. For this reason, a rebellion tradition did not arise among the Turkmen in Iraq, and the loyalty to the homeland and the state remained at a high level despite all kinds of oppression and persecution.

Turkmen were able to adapt to the environment they lived in Iraq and were especially influenced by Arab culture. In this context, it is possible to see different forms of tribal structure in Turkmen. While some Turkmen tribes indicate a belonging to the land (such as the Baghdadi tribe), others refer to clan names (such as Neftçi, Hüzmüzlü, Avcı). Especially among rural Turkmen, tribal structures are very prevalent. However, when Turkmen tribes in Iraq are considered in general, it can be said that they are mostly descendants from the Bayat boy (tribe) which have later taken on a variety of names. Yet, there are also tribes who are known to have descended from other boys. On

the one hand, it is thought that a single Turkmen tribe can be found to inhabit different regions in Iraq due to the fact that the Turkish presence in Iraq dates to ancient times and many Turkish states were established in Iraq along with waves of migration over the centuries. For example, members of the Muratlı tribe can be encountered both in Tel Afar and Tuz Khurmatu. There are other such examples detailed in various sources.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, it is known that Turkmen tribes were forced to join Arab tribes by the regime in some regions with Arab majority. The most important example of this is seen in the Karakul tribe. It is possible to encounter the Karakul tribe in many provinces of Iraq. Although the Karakul tribe, as the name suggests, is a Turkish tribe, today it manifests itself as an Arab tribe in many parts of Iraq. Ala Mekki Karakul, who was a deputy from Baghdad in the 2010 elections held in Iraq, does not speak any Turkish and says he is an Arab. It is possible to find many more Arabized tribes among the Turkmen tribes.

The tribal loyalty of Turkmen is mostly seen in rural areas such as Tel Afar, Tuz Khurmatu and Diyala. In city centers such as Kirkuk and Erbil, family names come to the fore. However, the tribal structure of the Turkmen differs from those of Kurdish and Arab communities. Turkmen tribes do not seem to have strict boundaries. Just as there are people belonging to Shiite, Sunni, and Alevi sects within each tribe, there is a lot of kinship among tribes. It would be appropriate to define the tribal structure of the Turkmen as "extended family". On the other hand, the basic dynamics of the tribal structure such as blood feud, custom and tribal unity are also found in the Turkmen tribes.

Turkmen are known as the intelligentsia of Iraq. Among the Turkmen community, the number of teachers especially, but also engineers, doctors and soldiers are high. According to some surveys, the rate of participation in higher education among Turkmen is quite high and gender distribution of highly educated people shows that the proportion of highly educated women is close to men.<sup>10</sup> Thus, it can be said that although Turkmen have a tribal structure and live in a closed society, they have been striving to keep up with modern thought within means possible.

<sup>9</sup> For more information see; Habib Hürmüzlü, Ekrem Pamukçu, "Irak'ta Türkmen Boy ve Oymakları" [Turkmen Clans and Nomadic Tribes in Iraq], Global Strateji Enstitüsü Yayınları, Ankara, 2005.

<sup>10</sup> İbrahim Sirkeci, "Irak'tan Türkmen Göçleri ve Göç Eğilimleri" [Turkmen Migrations from Iraq and migration trends], TIKV Global Strategy Institute, 2005, Ankara, p. 14.







# **THE RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL STRUCTURE OF THE TURKMENS**

3



## THE RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL STRUCTURE OF THE TURKMENS

Although Turkmens in Iraq are generally Muslim, there are also very few Christian Turkmens as well. Historically, almost all of the Christian Turkmens lived in Kirkuk Castle and for this reason they were named "Kale Gavurları" (Castle unbeliever). With the evacuation of Kirkuk Castle, Christian Turkmens were scattered to the neighborhoods around the castle. A church belonging to Christian Turkmens located in Almas District is still in operation. This Turkmen speaking Christian community is "Catholic" and their prayer book called "Taranım" is also in Turkish.

The majority of Turkmens are Muslims; there are communities belonging to both Shia and Sunni sects. Shia and Sunni Turkmens live side by side in almost every region, and their ratio may differ according to the regions. However, since sectarian identity is not at the forefront among the Turkmens, it would not be consistent to give a clear sectarian distribution of the community and place of residence. In addition, there are also Turkmen settlements that continue the Bektashi (a Sufi order) tradition. Many sources state that the Turkmen Shiites were Alevis in the past and later became Shiites.<sup>11</sup> It is possible to talk about the presence of Alevi-Bektashi Turkmens especially in Tel Afar, Tazehurmatu within Kirkuk District and Tuz Khurmatu. It is known that there were no mosques in Tel Afar until the 1940s, but that there was a Bektashi *Tekke* (Lodge) in Tisin neighborhood of Kirkuk District before it was destroyed by the Saddam regime. The *Tekke* of Kızıldeli Seyyid Ali Sultan (the center founded by the Bektashi dervish) is located in Tel Afar. Although most of the Sunni Turkmens belong to the Hanafi School (of jurisprudence), it is possible to state that most of the Turkmens living in Erbil are affiliated with the Shafi'i school. Among Sunni Turkmens, affiliation with Sufi orders is also widespread, most commonly Naqshbandi, Kadiri and Rufai orders. There are *tekkes* of these orders in Kirkuk and other Turkmen regions.

<sup>11</sup> C.J. Edmonds, "Kürtler, Türkler ve Araplar: Kuzey-doğu Irak'ta siyaset, seyahat ve inceleme (1919-1925)" [Kurds, Turks, and Arabs: Politics, Travel and Research in North-Eastern Iraq, 1919-1925], Trans. Serdar Şengül – Serap Ruken Şengül, Avesta Yayınları, İstanbul, 2003, p. 349-369.

Based on this data, it can be said that the Turkmens have a strong sense of religious belief, that they are a conservative community that adheres to their traditions and customs. While great importance is attached to religious worship among Turkmens, there are also many religious works commissioned by Turkmens as well. This commitment is also thought to be related to the Turkish past in the region. For example, the tradition of Mawlid celebrations to commemorate the birth of Prophet Muhammad was started in Erbil by the Turkish ruler Muzaffar ad-Din Gökböri (died. 630/1232), who is known as "the first Sultan of Arabs and Persians to hold a Mawlid feast". These celebrations, which were held first in the capital city of Erbil and then in Mosul, spread gradually. Also, historically many religious authorities were raised among Turkmens such as Mullah Suleiman, the father of the poet Fuzuli was the mufti of the city of al-Hillah.<sup>12</sup>

There is another community, who are claimed to have Turkish origins are called the Shabaks, who are one of the peoples of Iraq whose identity is disputed.<sup>13</sup> Some sources even suggest that the Shabaks have migrated to Iraq from southern Turkey. It is said that the Shabaks are a Turkmen tribe who were originally Muslim, but later changed their religious beliefs by bringing together the teachings from different religions. The Shabaks, who mostly live in and around Mosul, have their own holy book called "Buyruk" which is a Turkish word meaning command and can only be read by Shabak sheikhs.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Abdülkadir Karahan, "Fuzûlî", TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi, <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/fuzuli> (19.09.2020).

<sup>13</sup> Habib Hürmüzlü ve Ekrem Pamukçu, "Irak'ta Türkmen Boy ve Oymakları" [Turkmen Tribes and Clans in Iraq], Global Strateji Enstitüsü Yayınları, Ankara, 2005, p. 79-82.

<sup>14</sup> Mustafa Ziya, "Irak Türklerinde Dini İnançlar" [Religious Beliefs of Iraqi Turks], Yeniçağ Strateji, 9 December 2005, p. 6







## THE EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF THE TURKMENS

# 4



## THE EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF THE TURKMENS

Turkmens, who did not have the right to education in their mother tongue until the 1990s, still managed to preserve their language. There are many Turkmen who came to study in Turkey over the years. Turkish education in Iraq is carried out in schools called "Esasi" (main) Schools where all lessons are in Turkish under the Iraqi Ministry of National Education and in schools with Arabic education with only 1 or 2 hours of Turkish lessons per week (Shumul School). However, there are great difficulties in Turkish education. The number of Turkmen students attending "Esasi" Schools is gradually decreasing. The biggest factor for this is that Turkmen students who study in Turkish fail the university entrance exam which is in Arabic. In addition, Turkmen students who have studied at Turkish language schools either come to attend universities in Turkey or choose to study at Turkish Language departments at Iraqi universities.

Although the establishment of the Turkmen Education Directorate under the Iraqi Ministry of National Education in 2013 made significant contributions to Turkmen education, it was insufficient to find solutions to the deepest and most stubborn educational challenges of the Turkmen. According to the information obtained from the Turkmen Education Directorate, there is a shortage of books in Turkmen schools. School books do not reach students on time, and there are printing and information errors in the books that are delivered. In addition, the books prepared in Turkish do not progress simultaneously with the Iraqi curriculum and the books in primary schools remain at a level above the comprehension and reading level of Turkmen students. At the same time, there is a shortage of educational materials in Turkmen schools. In addition, there are problems in the provision of state support to Turkmen schools and in appointment of teachers. Furthermore, it was observed that the Turkish language proficiency level of the teachers who teach Turkish is also insufficient. After school programs are not sufficient in Turkish schools. In addition, Turkish education cannot be provided in many Turkmen settlements due to the shortage of teachers.





# **THE ECONOMIC STATUS OF THE TURKMENS**

**5**



## THE ECONOMIC STATUS OF THE TURKMENS

Basically, the Turkmen can be divided into two groups in socioeconomic terms, those who live in urban and rural areas. Due to this distinction, the job opportunities among them differ. Turkmen living in cities have mostly white collar jobs as engineers, teachers, doctors and civil servants, but there are also Turkmen who are tradesmen. As a matter of fact, the Turkmen constitute the majority of tradesmen in the regions they inhabit. The election of Turkmen as the president and vice-president of the Kirkuk Chamber of Commerce shows the weight of the Turkmen in the economic life of the city. It is known that Turkmen also work in the Northern Oil Company, which operates to extract the oil resources owned by the city. Apart from Kirkuk central district, Turkmen are engaged in agriculture in Daquq District and Tazehurmatu sub-district, where especially roses, okra and tomatoes are produced. In Altun Kupri sub-district, fishing on the Tigris River and growing vegetables as agricultural products are among economic activities.

Since the highly traveled Baghdad-Kirkuk road passes through Tuz Khurmatu district in Saladin province, it has a strategic location connecting the north to the south of the country. As already mentioned, the majority of the tradesmen in Tuz Khurmatu is Turkmen. In addition, tailoring and car repair services in the district are provided predominantly by the Turkmen. Furthermore, it is known that teachers from Tuz Khurmatu work in different parts of the province. Olives, cotton, broad beans, onions, mulberries, okra, peppers, tomatoes and cucumbers are grown in the Turkmen villages of Tuz Khurmatu. In addition, watermelon, melon, grape and pomegranate are produced in Bastamli village, while mulberry is grown in Amirli. Along with farming, fishing on the Tigris River and livestock breeding are also economic activities in Turkmen villages.

The province with the highest urban population is Erbil. Historically there was no rural Turkmen population in the province prior to Turkmen moving out of the city due to the increases in rents. When Erbil came under KDP control in 1996, the Kurdish villagers started to move into the city. For this reason, the weight of Turkmen in Erbil's commercial life has decreased. However, the shops around the Erbil Citadel, which is the historic center of the city, still belong to Turkmen.

Similar to Kirkuk, Turkmen live in both urban and rural areas within the Nineveh governorate. The district of Mosul, which is the center of the province, is historically located on the trade road with Anatolia. For this reason, trade is highly developed in Mosul. In the villages of Mosul and in Tel Afar district, Turkmen are generally engaged in animal husbandry and agriculture. Having fertile lands, Tel Afar is known as "Iraq's wheat warehouse". In addition to grains, pomegranate, fig, olive and citrus fruits, which are considered as strategic products in Iraq, are also produced in Tel Afar. Furthermore, Tel Afar, which is the Turkmen region closest to Turkey is situated on the crossroads between east-west and north-south migration routes. Therefore, the opening of the Turkey-Iraq Ovaköy Border Gate would contribute to developing the non-agricultural potential of Tel Afar as well.

Agriculture is the primary source of livelihood of Turkmen living in Kifri, Baquba Baladrooz, Khanaqin and Muqdadiya districts of Diyala Governorate. In addition to the production of dates and citrus fruits, sheep and poultry breeding is carried out. In addition, border trade is carried out because the province is on the Iranian border.



# THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ORGANIZATION OF THE TURKMENS

# 6

## THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ORGANIZATION OF THE TURKMENS

Iraqi Turkmens did not establish any social or political organizations until 1960. After the Kirkuk massacres against the Turkmens in 1959, *Irak Türkleri Kültür ve Yardımlaşma Derneği* (The Iraqi Turks Culture and Solidarity Association) was founded in Turkey, *Kardaşlık Ocağı* (The Brotherhood Club) was founded in 1960 in Baghdad. Although the general purpose of the Brotherhood Club was to carry out cultural and social activities, it was perceived as a political organization by the Iraqi regime and the only institution of the Turkmens at that time became a target. Apart from the Brotherhood Club, no Turkmen organizations existed until 1991, when the safe zone was established in the north of Iraq. Although the *Türkmen Demokratik Örgütü* (The Turkmen Democratic Organization) was established in Syria in 1980, its influence in Iraq remained limited. The Turkmen associations established in the safe zone in the north of Iraq from 1991 to 2003 were not able to organize the Turkmen community efficiently and have even experienced tension and fragmentation amongst themselves. At this point in time, the Turkmen organizations remain ineffective due to the effects of historical traumas, the policies of Iraqi regimes, communal divisions and a culture not inclined to associational life. For this reason, after the emergence of the new structure in post-2003 Iraq, the Turkmens are trying to get to know themselves and working on completing the mobilization of the community and building their associational structures.



### Historical Traumas

Iraqi Turkmens have lost their ruling position on the territories they inhabited following the breakup of the Ottoman Empire and the emergence of the Iraqi state, the Turkmens were adversely affected as they were disconnected from Turkey, which they viewed as their homeland. With the Ankara Agreement signed on June 5, 1926, Mosul province was left to the British-controlled Iraqi territories. The Ankara Agreement was published in the *Resmî Ceride* (The Official Gazette) on July 18, 1926 and

became law.<sup>15</sup> Following their separation from Turkey, the Turkmen became introverted, mostly put their efforts towards protecting their language, culture, tradition and population and refrained from openly expressing their identities in order to avoid a direct assault on the community.

The Turkmen identity has been perceived as a threat and oppressed by Iraq since the beginning of the emphasis on Turkishness. From the 1920s until today, Turkmen have experienced many unfortunate events, including massacres, and these events have caused trauma in the Turkmen society. Among these acts of violence, the ones that have left the deepest scars among the Turkmen were the 1959 Kirkuk Massacre and the execution of Turkmen leaders in 1980.

The first of the systematic attacks against Turkmen took place in 1920 in the Turkmen city of Tel Afar. This event, known as the Kaçakaç Massacre, clearly revealed the suffering of the Turkmen who resisted the British occupation. The people of the region, who learned that the British troops were going to enter Tel Afar, evacuated the city and fled to the mountains and lived in distress in the mountains for three months. When the British soldiers entered the city, seeing that the houses were empty, they destroyed the houses and granaries. Later, people of Tel Afar returned to their settlements. However, the British persecution did not end; prominent Turkmen figures were arrested, tortured and exiled. This incident left deep traces in Tel Afar.<sup>16</sup>

Such oppression and exile movements continued in 1924 with the events known as the Nestorian Massacre. The events started when the Levies, who were formed with the support of Britain were sent to Kirkuk, where Turkmen were most concentrated in Iraq. As a result of a fight between these soldiers, who carried out propaganda activities aimed at provoking the people and the tradesmen, one of the soldiers was injured and the armed soldiers started firing randomly in the streets of Kirkuk. In this incident, many Turkmen were massacred and hundreds of houses and shops belonging to Turkmen were destroyed.<sup>17</sup> In this incident, 84 people whose identities are known have been killed.<sup>18</sup> However, it is stated in various sources that the number of Turkmen who lost their lives is more than 200.<sup>19</sup>

In the 1940s, another painful event took place in Kirkuk after the Second World War. Workers working for the Kirkuk Petroleum Company appealed to the company managers for their wages, working and living conditions to be improved, and when they saw that their requests were not taken seriously, they protested the situation through petitions and writing in newspapers. Consequently, in July 1946, the workers went on strike. Workers started to gather in a square called *Gavurbağı* (Gawer Baghi) every evening; however, the area was surrounded by the police. When police officers realized the workers would not disperse, they began to shoot. In this incident, many Turkmen lost their lives.<sup>20</sup>

Another massacre that left its mark on Turkmen history and which can be considered as one of the bloodiest took place on 14 July 1959. In 1958, Major General Abdul Karim Qasim overthrew the monarchy and proclaimed a new republic in Iraq. This event raised the hopes of Turkmen who had

<sup>15</sup> Resmi Ceride [Official Gazette], 18 Temmuz 1924, Sayı:423

<sup>16</sup> Suphi Saatçi, *Tarihten Günümüze Irak Türkmenleri* [Iraqi Turkmen From Past to Present], Ötüken Neşriyat, İstanbul 2003, p. 207.

<sup>17</sup> Ekrem Pamukçu, "Irak Türklerine Uygulanan Katliamlar" [Massacres of Iraqi Turks], *Kerkük Journal*, Special Issue, July 1999, no. 25, p.4.

<sup>18</sup> For names, see Şemsettin Küzeci, "Kerkük Soykırımları" [Kirkuk Genocides], *Teknoed Yayınları*, Ankara, 2004, p.42-46.

<sup>19</sup> Liam Anderson and Gareth Stansfield, "Crisis in Kirkuk: The Ethnopolitics of Conflict and Compromise", University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 2009, p. 63.

<sup>20</sup> Şevket Koçsoy, "Irak Türkleri" [Iraqi Turks], *Boğaziçi Yayınları*, İstanbul, 1991, p. 128.





suffered for nearly 40 years, and unaware of the consequences to follow, started to prepare for the celebration of the first year of the foundation of the republic. Giving the impression that this massacre was preplanned, some preliminary arrangements were made under the protection of the regime; Maruf el-Berzenci, a radical communist who had been educated in Moscow for years, was appointed mayor of Kirkuk Municipality.<sup>21</sup> Before the massacre, many prominent Iraqi Turks were arrested and sent to isolation camps. Various slogans were chanted by the militants of some Kurdish and Communist organizations against the Turkmens who were preparing for the celebrations and when Turkmens responded, they were fired on. First, the Turkmen coffeehouse was attacked and its owner was killed. Turkmens in the parade began to disperse with gunfire and a curfew was declared. Later, prominent Turkmens were taken from their homes to the Kirkuk Barracks, where Turkmens were tried by the so-called People's Courts established there within 5 to 10 minutes and shot. Ata Hayrullah, one of the greatest leaders of the Turkmens, and his brother Colonel İhsan Hayrullah were also killed in the massacre. In addition, shops, trade centers and houses belonging to the Turkmens were looted. The massacre lasted for three days. The New York Times reported on July 21, 1959 that "the majority of Kirkuk, which is 150 miles north of Baghdad, consists of relatively prosperous Turkmens. According to diplomatic sources in Baghdad, the notables of the Turkmen community in Kirkuk were taken out of their homes and killed. Ethnic tensions have risen in the city, because "Kurds are pro-communist, whereas the Turkmens are not."<sup>22</sup>

Persecution of Turkmens was not limited to these incidents. The Ba'ath regime also carried out policies against Turkmens that amounted to massacres. The 1991 Altun Kupri and 1996 Erbil massacres being the worst ones.<sup>23</sup> The martyrdom of Turkmen leaders in 1980 were also among the most devastating. The Saddam regime executed prominent Turkmen leaders Necdet Kocak,

<sup>21</sup> İzzettin Kerkük, "Kerkük Hatıralarım XII" [My Kirkuk Diaries], Irak Türkleri Kültür ve Yardımlaşma Derneği, 11 April 2013, <http://www.irakturkleri.org/makalegoster.php?makale=74>, (Accessed: 1 April 2020)

<sup>22</sup> Ramazan K. Kurt, "Kerkük İkinci Çanakkaledir" [Kirkuk is the second Dardanelles], Ortadoğu Gazetesi, 11 January 2007.

<sup>23</sup> For detailed information see; Ekrem Pamukçu, "Irak Türklerine Uygulanan Katliamlar" [Pogroms against Iraqi Turks], Kerkük Journal Special Issue, July 1999, No: 25, p. 5.

Abdullah Abdulrahman, and Adil Şerif in 1980, and Rıza Demirci was tortured to death. After these executions, the national consciousness that had been growing among the Turkmen started to decline again and these executions impeded the rise of new leaders that would keep this consciousness alive. The 1991 Altun Kupri and 1996 Erbil massacres are examples carried out by the Ba'ath regime which aimed to harm the Turkmen national consciousness. In addition, assimilation policies implemented by the regime were also effective in this sense. The houses and lands of the Turkmen were forcibly taken away from them, the Turkmen were forbidden to buy real estate, and many Turkmen who did not adopt Arabic names were not employed in state institutions.

The Altun Kupri Massacre in 1991 had a deep impact on the Turkmen. In Iraq, Turkmen have both created a buffer zone between Kurds and Arabs as required by the geography they live in, and became a target in Saddam Hussein's operations to suppress Kurdish groups in the north. What happened in Altun Kupri is an example of this. In 1991, Kurdish groups in the north and Shiite groups in the south rebelled by taking advantage of the power vacuum created in Iraq by the Gulf War. As Saddam's forces were concentrated in Baghdad, Kurdish groups took that opportunity to enter Kirkuk and the Peshmerga dominated the city. However, the Iraqi army recovered and advanced towards Kirkuk. The Turkmen living in the region came under attack with many losing their lives and the Peshmerga started to flee towards Erbil and the mountains. After taking Kirkuk back, Saddam's forces started to move towards Erbil. The people of Altun Kupri, situated between Erbil and Kirkuk, were caught between the Peshmerga and Saddam's forces. While the Iraqi army tried to capture those who fled Kirkuk, many Turkmen, who had nothing to do with the events died, others were caught and executed collectively or imprisoned.<sup>24</sup>

Since Turkmen political movements were gaining ground in northern Iraq after 1991, the target of the attacks shifted to political organizations. Until 2003, many attacks were carried out against the Turkmen political organizations. The clearest examples are the attacks on the *Irak Türkmen Cephesi* (The Iraqi Turkmen Front- ITF) in 1996, 1998 and 2000.<sup>25</sup> The acts of violence against Turkmen did not slow down during the US and allied forces occupation. On the contrary, since 2003 along with mass killings, assassinations of prominent community leaders and members of ITF were committed including Mustafa Kemal Yayçılı<sup>26</sup>, Yavuz Efendioğlu<sup>27</sup>, Amir Selbi<sup>28</sup>, Yaşar Cengiz<sup>29</sup>, General Adnan Abdurrezzak<sup>30</sup>, Colonel Sabah Karaaltun<sup>31</sup>, Ali Haşim Muhtaroglu<sup>32</sup>, Ahmet Koca<sup>33</sup> and Münir Kafli.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Erşat Hürmüzlü, "Türkmenler ve Irak" [Turkmen and Iraq], Kerkük Vakfı, İstanbul, 2003, p. 68.

<sup>25</sup> Necati Özfatura, "Kuzey Irak'ta Neler Oluyor?-2" [What's Happening in Northern Iraq?], <http://www.turkiyegazetesi.com/makaledetay.aspx?ID=75790>, Accessed: 22 April 2010.

<sup>26</sup> Kerkük'te Türkmen lider öldürüldü" [Turkmen leader killed in Kirkuk], Hürriyet, 14 May 2004, <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/dunya/kerkukte-turkmen-lider-olduruldu-225648>, (Accessed: 1 April 2020)

<sup>27</sup> "Irak'ta Türkmen lidere suikast" [Assassination of Turkmen leader in Iraq], Milliyet, 23 November 2009, <https://www.milliyet.com.tr/dunya/irak-ta-turkmen-lidere-suikast-1165227>, (Accessed: 1 April 2020)

<sup>28</sup> "Amir Muhammed Selbi'ye silahlı saldırı" [Armed attack on Amer Muhammed Selbi] Demirören News Agency, 14 March 2011, <https://www.dha.com.tr/dis/amir-muhammed-selbiye-silahlı-saldırı/haber-148063>, (Accessed: 1 April 2020)

<sup>29</sup> "Şehit Yaşar Cengiz Kerkük'te Anıldı" [Martyr Yaşar Cengiz commemorated in Kirkuk], Türkmeneli TV, 8 December 2018, <http://turkmenelitv.com/haberler/turkmeneli/item/21275-sehit-yasar-cengiz-kerkuk-te-anildi.html>, (Accessed: 1 April 2020)

<sup>30</sup> "Turkey condemns killing of Iraqi Turkmen general in Kirkuk", Anatolian Agency, 6 September 2012, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/turkey/turkey-condemns-killing-of-iraqi-turkmen-general-in-kirkuk/338348>, (Accessed: 1 April 2020)

<sup>31</sup> "Albay Sabah Karaaltun şehitler kervanına katıldı" [Colonel Sabah Karaaltun joined the martyr's caravan], Biz Türkmeniz, 3 June 2005, <http://www.bizturkmeniz.com/tr/index.php?page=article&id=5992>, (Accessed: 1 April 2020)

<sup>32</sup> Türkmenlere hain saldırı 13 ölü" [A malicious attack on Turkmen, 13 Dead], Yeniçağ Gazetesi, 25 June 2013, <https://www.yenicaggazetesi.com.tr/turkmenlere-hain-saldırı-13-olu-85835h.htm>, (Accessed: 1 April 2020)

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> "Münir Kafli'nin cenazesi toprağa verildi" [Munir Kafli buried], Anadolu Ajansı, 24 Haziran 2014, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/munir-kaflinin-cenazesi-topraga-verildi/148353>, (Accessed: 1 April 2020)

A brief glance at Iraqi Turkmen history shows that each time the community comes under direct attack, they mobilize and start to organize. As mentioned before, the Turkmens did not establish any formal organizations in Iraq until 1960. However, they have tried to fight against injustice and oppression locally through informal forms of mobilization. For example, during the Lausanne Conference, Turkmens worked to keep Mosul within the boundaries of Turkey and the Nestorian Massacre was conducted against Turkmens during this period. This was to the extent that, in 1925, Mustafa Kemal Pasha (Atatürk) sent a letter of support to Seyid Muhammed Cebbari, one of the tribal leaders who worked for this cause in Kirkuk.<sup>35</sup>

According to the Code of Local Languages enacted in Iraq in 1931, Turkish would be used in court trials and Turkish education would be provided in all Turkmen regions, especially in Erbil and Kirkuk.<sup>36</sup> However, when these rights were taken away, there were student riots and teachers' protests and Turkish intellectuals fought the government's decision. Another example is the demonstrations of the Kirkuk Oil Company employees that led to the Gawer Baghi Massacre in 1946. It is known that these protests, attended by approximately 5 thousand people, were carried out to oppose the replacement of Turkmen workers with Kurdish, Assyrian and Armenian workers as well as to request the improvement of their social and economic conditions.<sup>37</sup> After the Kirkuk Massacre in 1959, the Turkmens struggle continued, but this time the idea of transforming into an organized struggle was adopted. Iraqi Turks Culture and Solidarity Association was founded in 1959 in Turkey and then in January 1960, The Turkmen Brotherhood Club was founded. Although the Brotherhood Club was an organization established to conduct social and cultural activities under the control of the Iraqi government, some political activities were carried out to protect and develop the Turkmen national consciousness as well. However, despite the existence of a Turkmen organization, Turkmens preferred social mobilization over institutionalized activities. The student riots in Kirkuk in 1970 are the best example of this. Turkmens were given the right to speak and read in their own language with order number 89 entitled "The Cultural Rights of the Turkmen Nationals" of the Iraqi Revolutionary Command Council on 24 January 1970.<sup>38</sup> However, large protests were held especially in Kirkuk due to the problems regarding the actual implementation of the decree. On October 5, 1970, a large group of lawyers, doctors and shopkeepers sent a letter to the Iraqi government on behalf of the Turkmens and demanded their rights. During the demonstrations that continued in 1971, the schools were seized by the Iraqi Directorate of National Education. After this date, the Turkmens continued to fight against oppression, and the pressure they faced increased as their power to struggle increased. Thus, *Türkmen Milliyetçi Hareketi* (The Turkmen Nationalist Movement) was formed in 1972.

After 1980, several prominent Turkmen leaders were hanged by Saddam Hussein. Due to oppression within Iraq, Turkmens tried to organize outside the country as well as in locations away from the central administration in Baghdad. The Turkmen Brotherhood Center was opened in 1974 in Erbil. The Turkmen Democratic Organization was established in Syria in 1980, but it had to cease its activities in 1985.<sup>39</sup> In 1988, *Irak Milli Türkmen Partisi* (The Iraqi National Turkmen Party), which can be

<sup>35</sup> For the letter see, Suphi Saatçi, *Tarihten Günümüze Irak Türkmenleri* [Iraqi Turkmen From Past to Present], Ötüken Neşriyat, İstanbul 2003, p. 196-197.

<sup>36</sup> Habib Hümmüzlü, "Irak'ta Resmi Diller Yasası ve Türkmenler" [Official Languages Laws and Turkmen in Iraq], Ortadoğu Araştırmaları Merkezi (ORSAM), 16 June 2015, <https://www.orsam.org.tr/tr/irak-ta-resmi-diller-yasasi-ve-turkmenler/>, (Accessed: 1 April 2020)

<sup>37</sup> Suphi Saatçi, "Gävurbağı Katliamı (12 Temmuz 1946)" [Gawer Baghi Massacre], Türkmen Basın Ajansı, 15 July 2019, <https://www.tbajansi.com/gavurbagi-katliami-12-temmuz-1946/>, (Accessed: 1 April 2020)

<sup>38</sup> Habib Hümmüzlü, "Irak'ta Türkçe Eğitimin Tarihçesi ve Hukuki Boyutu" [The History and Legal Aspect of Turkish Education in Iraq], 14 May 2017, Hür Fikirler, <http://afkarhura.com/tr/?p=2517>, (Accessed: 1 April 2020)

<sup>39</sup> Bilgay Duman, "17. Yılında Irak Türkmen Cephesi ve Irak Siyasetinde Türkmenler" [17th Anniversary of Iraqi Turkmen Front and Turkmen in Iraqi Politics], Ortadoğu Analiz, May 2012, Issue: 4, No: 41.

considered as the first Turkmen political party was founded in Turkey. After the establishment of the safe zone in the north of Iraq in 1991, the party formally established in Iraq and started its activities there. This political opening in northern Iraq has benefited Turkmen. More than 20 Turkmen parties have been established as well as many non-governmental organizations after 1991. However, it can be said that more than half of these parties were established with the help of Kurdish groups in northern Iraq in order to fill the power vacuum within the Turkmen community. To counter this situation, Turkmen institutions and organizations that defined themselves as "nationalist" came together in 1994 and founded The Iraqi Turkmen Front (ITF) on 24 April 1994.<sup>40</sup>

## Social Dynamics

After Mosul and Kirkuk provinces were left to Iraq under British rule with the 1926 Ankara Agreement, the Turkmen were treated as foreigners in their homeland and therefore, they tried to protect their identity. As mentioned before, although Turkmen have a statist political culture, since they regarded themselves as one of the main constituent elements of the newly established Iraqi state, they chose not to rebel against it, but focused only on preserving their identity. Therefore, although religious and sectarian differences exist among Turkmen, the primary identity of being Turkmen has been prioritized. Moreover, their conservative family structure prevented the spread of communist and socialist ideologies among Turkmen even though these were popular in Iraq for a period of time. In addition to the Turkmen's social structure, Turkey's position in the anti-communist bloc during the Cold War and the political orientations of Turkmen living in Turkey were other reasons why these ideological movements could not find support within the community. The active role of communists in the traumatic events experienced by Turkmen and the pressures of the Arab Socialist Ba'ath are also among the factors for Turkmen's nationalist attitude.

Another important social dynamic is that since large numbers of Turkmen state officials were deported to non-Turkmen regions, many Turkmen community leaders were persecuted, and emigration since the 1930s led Turkmen youth and women to bear the responsibility for keeping the community alive. After the 1950s, Turkmen Student Unions had an important place in shaping the Turkmen struggle and politics. Following the 1959 Kirkuk Massacre, which had left the deepest scar in Turkmen national consciousness, a group of nationalist Turkmen youth founded The Iraqi Turkmen Student Association and a group of Turkmen who were studying in Turkey established Iraqi Turks Culture and Solidarity Association. The latter became one of the most important institutions that shaped Turkmen politics because many young Turkmen either were blocked from attending university and were forced to study at certain departments during Saddam Hussein rule, so they went mainly to Turkey to receive education. For example, Necdet Kocak, Rıza Demirci have returned to Iraq after attending university in Turkey and tried to give direction to the Turkmen cause at a young age and have become the target of the regime. The obstruction of education and targeting of young intellectuals can be defined as the biggest obstacles to the emergence of the Turkmen who have leadership potential on the political scene. The execution of Colonel Abdullah Abdurrahman, Necdet Koçak, Rıza Demirci and Adil Şerif for "being Turkmen"<sup>41</sup> in 1980 is one of the biggest traumas.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> "Irak Türkmen Liderlerinin Aziz Hatırasına: 16 Ocak Türkmen Şehitleri Günü" [In precious memory of Iraqi Turkmen Leaders: January 16<sup>th</sup> Day of Turkmen Martyrs], 16 January 2020, Qırım News Agency, <https://qha.com.tr/haberler/irak-turkmen-liderlerinin-aziz-hatirasina-16-ocak-turkmen-sehitleri-gunu/145461/>, (Accessed: 15 April 2020)



In sum, this history shows that Turkmen have mobilized after every major traumatic event that the community experiences. The Turkmen Brotherhood Club and the Iraqi Turks Culture and Solidarity Association were founded after the Kirkuk Massacre in 1959, the Turkmen Nationalist Movement in 1972 was founded after the regime took away the right of Turkmen to have education in their own language, and the Turkmen National Democratic Organization founded after the hanging execution of Turkmen leaders are examples of this pattern. In addition, the Turkmen National Democratic Organization has joined the Iraqi National Democratic Front.<sup>42</sup> The cooperation of Turkmen political organizations with the opposition groups against Ba'ath regime have changed the significance of Turkmen politics. On the other hand, Turkmen parties had structural foundations, but it could be said that they revealed themselves as a response to their experiences. Still, it is difficult to say if they were effective enough due to the regime's practices.

### The Effect of Iraq's Domestic Politics

The Turkmen have been excluded, oppressed and even attempted to be destroyed by the governments in Iraq throughout history. Although some cultural rights of the Turks were legally provided, they were not implemented. After the Iraqi State was established, there was an attempt to make the Turks in Iraq adopt "Iraqi" consciousness and with it "Arab" consciousness. The Iraqi government prohibited teaching Turkish in primary schools outside of the Kirkuk city center in the 1930-1931 academic year, and in a few schools left within Kirkuk, Turkish language class was reduced to one hour a week. In 1937, even this class was terminated by Baghdad.<sup>43</sup> In addition, Turkish origin civil servants were deported to work in non-Turkish regions with the aim of suppressing a common Turkish consciousness.

İsmet Abdülmecid, a Turkmen from Kirkuk, spent most of his life as a civil servant in Baghdad and served as Chief Justice of Iraqi State Council from 2003 to 2006. He has stated that, although he was known to be Turkmen, he could not speak Turkmen-language during his tenure and refrained from articulating his Turkmen identity. He knew that complaints would be filed against him with the higher authorities. He further indicated witnessing many similar examples throughout his career.<sup>44</sup>

In the 1940s, the Turkmen workers of the Kirkuk Oil Company were dismissed and Christians and Armenians were hired to replace them. Turkmen who exercised their democratic rights in the face of violation of their rights were punished by the regime. The Gawer Baghi Massacre in 1946 is an example of this.

Again in the 1970s, although the Turkmen and some minorities were given cultural and social rights legally, these were not put into practice and were completely abolished afterwards. Arabization policies towards Kirkuk gained momentum in the mid-1970s and many Turkmen were displaced and sent to the provinces in the south of Iraq. In fact, Kirkuk was renamed as Tamim and its administrative borders were changed; especially those settlements, where Turkmen constituted the majority, such as Tuz Khurmatu and Kifri, were administratively attached to other provinces. Thus, the opportunity of Turkmen to live together has been weakened. Furthermore, the decision made in 1977 to make Tel Afar, the largest district of the Middle East and where Turkmen live, into a

<sup>42</sup> "Irak Türkmenlerinin Siyasi Yapılanma Geçmişi" [History of Political Organizations of Iraqi Turkmen], Türkmeneli İşbirliği ve Kültür Vakfı, [http://turkmeneli.org.tr/siyasi\\_yapi.html](http://turkmeneli.org.tr/siyasi_yapi.html), (Accessed: 15 April 2020)

<sup>43</sup> Saatçi, Tarihten Günümüze Irak Türkmenleri [Iraqi Turkmen From Past to Present], Ötüken Neşriyat, İstanbul, 2003, p. 207.

<sup>44</sup> Abdülmecid, İsmet. (The former Chief Justice of the Iraqi State Council). Personal Interview. 15 April 2010.

governorate was not implemented. Thus the emergence of a Turkmen city was prevented and Tel Afar was suppressed. Also, the lands of Turkmens in Tel Afar were given to some Arab tribes.

On the one hand, it was not possible for Turkmens to establish an institution that prioritizes the national identity element. On the other hand, "partisanship" was perceived negatively among Turkmens. The practices of the Ba'ath Party and the Communist Party in Iraq against the Turkmen community caused the prejudice towards political parties and until recently stayed away from partisanship. It is expressed that since the Ba'ath is the first thing that comes to the minds of Turkmens when they think of political parties, the Turkmen people stay away from political parties and also Turkmen political parties have a hard time finding a base.





# **TURKMEN POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS**

**7**



## TURKMEN POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS

The Turkmen political movement in Iraq has a short history. As stated previously, in 1980, the first political organization, the Turkmen National Democratic Organization, was founded in Syria. However, it survived only for a short period of time and was disbanded in 1985. The Iraqi National Turkmen Party, the first Turkmen political party was founded in Turkey in 1988 and later declared in Iraq in 1991. After that, several other Turkmen parties were established. In order to prevent disorganization, the ITF was established in 1995 bringing the Iraqi National Turkmen Party, *Türkmeneli Partisi* (The Turkmeneli Party), *Türkmen Bağımsızlar Hareketi* (The Turkmen Independent Movement), *Türkmen İslami Hareketi* (The Turkmen Islamic Movement) and *Türkmeneli İşbirliği ve Kültür Vakfı* (The Turkmeneli Cooperation and Culture Foundation) and The Turkmen Brotherhood Club under one roof. In addition, *Türkmen Milli Meclisi* (The Turkmen National Council), which was later renamed *Türkmen Milli Şurası* (The Turkmen National Congress), was formed in order to discuss challenges of Turkmen and to present a road map for the ITF. Today, while the ITF is still the biggest political organization of the Turkmen, many Turkmen parties were formed in the post-2003 period. In addition, after the ITF declared itself a political party in 2008, some parties within the ITF have left and started to operate independently. Currently, Turkmen political organizations can be categorized into "nationalist," "Islamic" and "*ulusalcı*-nationalist." Nationalist parties are those that follow the ITF line and prioritize the Turkmen identity, but also protect their Iraqi identity. Islamic parties attach more importance to religious and sectarian identity. Those parties who label themselves as "*ulusalcı*-nationalist" are those that cooperate with Kurdish groups and are referred to as "puppet" parties by the majority of the Turkmen population and politicians. These parties argue that they can cooperate with any group that may benefit the Turkmen, and the Kurds are a part of the Iraqi people like the Arabs. They express that the Turkmen share the same fate with the Kurds and at the same time believe that the Turkmen issue should be resolved within Iraq. Although there is a difference in discourse between Turkmen political movements, it can be stated that the common point is the protection and promotion of the Turkmen national identity and the guarantee of their political, cultural, social and economic rights in line with democratic values. Most parties share a common discourse, using the concepts of "language, religion, and homeland." There is hardly any difference in discourse between the ITF and parties who were founded by those who left the ITF. It seems the different parties emerged due to personal differences and disagreements.

The first institution that comes to mind when Turkmen are concerned both in Iraq and internationally is the ITF. It is possible to say that Turkmen parties other than ITF do not play an active role in Iraqi politics since most of these parties were either ones that left the ITF or were founded by people who were previously active in the ITF and have financial difficulties. For this reason, their organizational structure is very weak. For example, although there are around 20 Turkmen parties, only 3 or 4 of them have active youth branches. Turkmen political parties operating in Iraq are as follows:

Parties that have been listed according to their registration numbers.

# TURKMEN POLITICAL PARTIES IN IRAQ

"Parties are listed according to their registration numbers."



REGISTRATION NO  
11  
PARTY  
Iraqi Turkmen Justice Party  
HEADQUARTER  
Kirkuk  
PARTY CHAIRMAN  
Sabah Hacıoğlu



REGISTRATION NO  
36  
PARTY  
Turkmen Development Party  
HEADQUARTER  
Erbil  
PARTY CHAIRMAN  
Muhammed Sadeh Enver



REGISTRATION NO  
37  
PARTY  
Turkmen Reform Party  
HEADQUARTER  
Erbil  
PARTY CHAIRMAN  
Abdulkadir Bezirgan



REGISTRATION NO  
57  
PARTY  
Turkmen Modern People's Party  
HEADQUARTER  
Kirkuk  
PARTY CHAIRMAN  
Turhan Mızır Hasan



REGISTRATION NO  
59  
PARTY  
Turkmen Decision Party  
HEADQUARTER  
Kirkuk  
PARTY CHAIRMAN  
Abdulkarim Mustafa



REGISTRATION NO  
62  
PARTY  
Iraqi Turkmen Front  
HEADQUARTER  
Kirkuk  
PARTY CHAIRMAN  
Hasan Turan



REGISTRATION NO  
63  
PARTY  
Turkmeneli Party  
HEADQUARTER  
Kirkuk  
PARTY CHAIRMAN  
Rıyaz Sarıkahya



REGISTRATION NO  
66  
PARTY  
Turkmen Nationalist Movement  
HEADQUARTER  
Kirkuk  
PARTY CHAIRMAN  
Husamettin Beyatlı



REGISTRATION NO  
147  
PARTY  
Turkmen Will Party  
HEADQUARTER  
Kirkuk  
PARTY CHAIRMAN  
Jale Nefici



REGISTRATION NO  
153  
PARTY  
Islamic Union of Iraqi Turkmen  
HEADQUARTER  
Kirkuk  
PARTY CHAIRMAN  
Casim Muhammed Cefar



REGISTRATION NO  
186  
PARTY  
Iraqi Turkmen Liberation Front  
HEADQUARTER  
Nineveh  
PARTY CHAIRMAN  
Sabit Bisher



Ortadoğu Araştırmaları Merkezi  
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Center for Middle Eastern Studies



T.C. KÜLTÜR VE TURİZM BAKANLIĞI  
YURTDIŞI TÜRKLER VE AKRABA  
TOPLULUKLAR BAŞKANLIĞI



## The Iraqi Turkmen Front

The ITF, which has actively continued its activities in Iraq since its establishment, will be examined in more detail for a better understanding of the Turkmen politics in Iraq. The Iraqi Turkmen Front (ITF), was established in February 1995 and officially declared its founding on April 24, 1995. Turhan Ketene, who was the chairman of the Ankara Branch of the Iraqi Turks Culture and Solidarity Association at that time became the first chairman of the ITF. At its founding, the ITF was composed of three political parties, namely, The Iraqi National Turkmen Party (INTP), *Türkmen Birlik Partisi* (The Turkmen Unity Party (later renamed The Turkmeneli Party), The Turkmen Independents Movement, and three non-governmental organizations, namely The Turkmen Brotherhood Club (Erbil Branch), the Turkmeneli Cooperation and Culture Foundation and The Iraqi Turkmens Culture and Solidarity Association. In its founding declaration on August 19, 1995, the ITF provided extensive information about the organization, and its basic principles and goals. The ITF underlined the difficult position Turkmens in the region were in due to the extension of the economic sanction on Iraq after the end of the Gulf War and the situation on the ground in the north of Iraq. It stated that the INTP had been providing services of education, culture, social assistance, radio and television to the Turkmen people even though these were not among the organization's principle responsibilities. It recognized that although the number of Turkmen political parties had been increasing due to the growing needs of the Turkmens, the necessary services were not provided sufficiently due to lack of coordination among these organizations. Thus, the declaration stated that to overcome these difficulties The Turkmen Front was established as a result of the agreement of the organizations operating on behalf of the Turkmens to gather their activities under one roof. Accordingly, the basic principles of the ITF were stated as follows:<sup>45</sup>

- Ensuring the unity and solidarity of the Turkmens,
- Acquisition of the constitutional rights of the Turkmen community in political, legal, cultural and economic fields within the framework of Iraq's territorial integrity.

The stated aims of the ITF were;

- To ensure effective representation of Turkmens in local and central governments,
- Eliminating the oppression and threats against the Turkmens,
- Meeting the needs of the Turkmen people and finding solutions to their problems,
- Contributing to the end of the conflicts in the region and to the solution of the problems through dialogue,
- To strengthen and further the Turkmen struggle in order to ensure the establishment of a democratic and parliamentary regime that respects human rights and freedoms and will secure the legitimate rights of all nations, especially the Turkmens, that constitute the Iraqi people,

<sup>45</sup> Press release published by the ITF Board of Directors on 19 August 1995.

- To obtain the rights and freedoms of the Turkmen community by refusing any kind of brute force and armed action.

The ITF, which started its work in Erbil, could not find the opportunity to operate outside the safe zone like other Iraqi opposition parties. Although the influence of the ITF was limited, it created an opportunity for the Turkmen who were able to come to the safe zone from other regions of Iraq and wanted to participate in the political process, thus increasing Turkmen support for the movement especially from Kirkuk. The ITF, which was established in opposition to Saddam Hussein, carried out its work together with the Iraqi opposition movement and joined its organization called the Iraqi National Congress (INC). However, the Iraqi opposition was cool towards the ITF since the organization members referred to Turkey as their "fatherland" and the organization emphasized this point in its declarations.

Then "the Turkmen Council" was formed as an assembly whose decisions would be implemented by the ITF executive body, thus aiming to organize as a communal governance structure and to raise its resources to overcome the problems of the Turkmen community. To this end, the ITF started social and cultural campaigns and initiatives to meet the needs of the Turkmen such as food, medicine, clothing, accommodation and education. In this context, 9 Turkmen schools were opened in Erbil whose expenses were covered by the ITF. In addition, a radio station, a newspaper, and a printing house were started. The unrest caused by the war environment led the ITF to establish an armed defense unit in order to protect the Turkmen people, and the "Turkmen Akinji Unit" was formed initially with 350 people.

However, the fact that most of the members of "the Turkmen Council" were in Turkey with limited contact with the region has undermined the effectiveness of both the ITF and the council which led to an increase in the willingness of the party leaders within the ITF and others in the executive positions to pursue their own policies, and differences of opinion began to surface. In fact, these differences have transformed into a conflict and the ITF faced disintegration. As a result, the first ITF Chairman Turhan Ketene resigned in February 1996 and was replaced by Sinan Çelebi, a relative of İhsan Doğramacı.

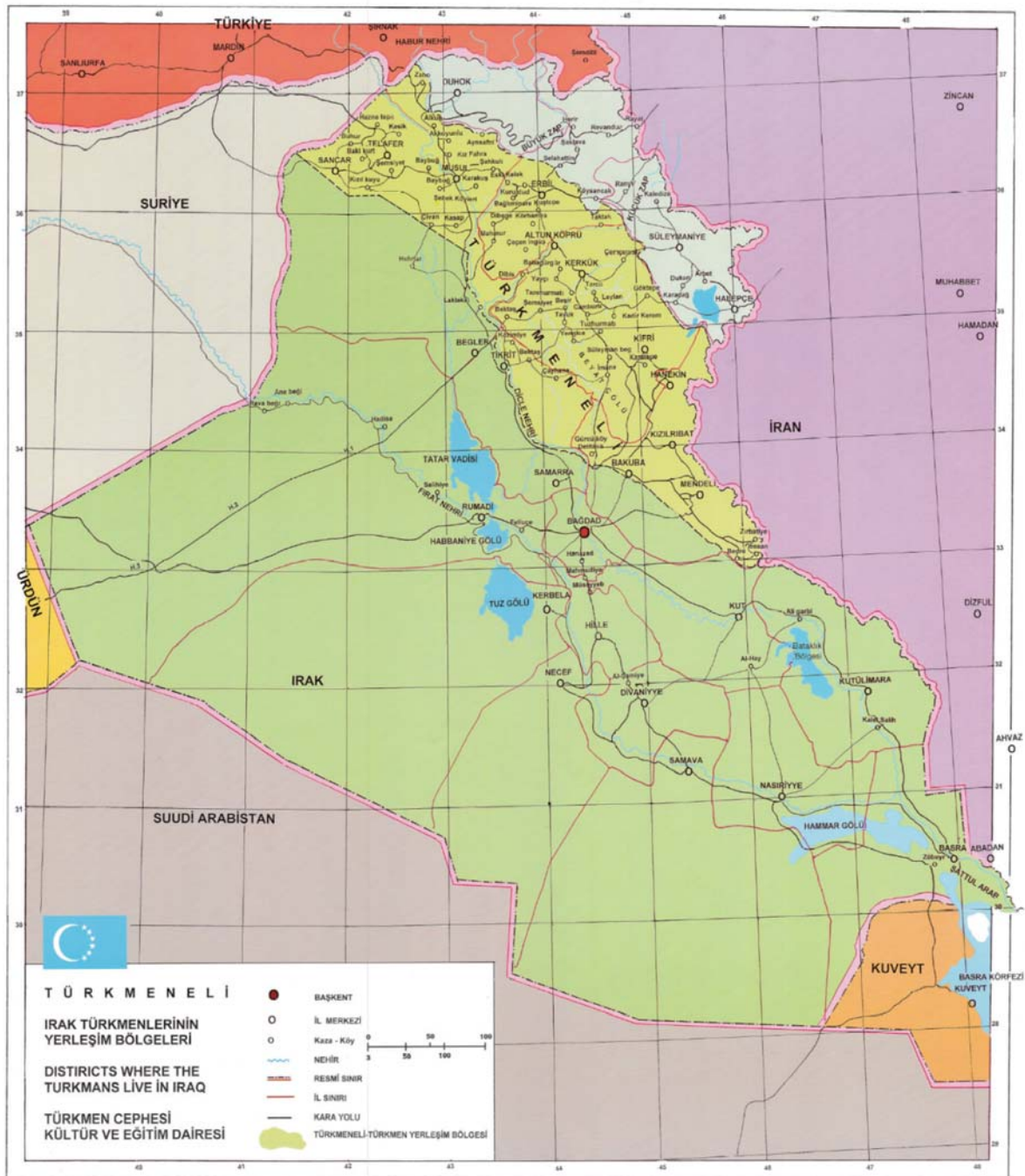
However, disputes continued following this change and a conflict of authority and representation arose between the parties within the ITF. In order to eliminate this confusion and restore coordination, "The Erbil Turkmen Protocol" was signed between the groups within the ITF on February 5, 1999. The document laid down the basic rules of engagement amongst the Iraqi Turkmen political parties and organizations as well as in their relations and cooperation with the ITF. The articles of the protocol are important since they formed the basis of the ITF's bylaws. With this protocol, the ITF was authorized once again to represent the Turkmen community by The Iraqi National Turkmen Party, The Turkmeneli Party, The Turkmen Independent Movement and The Turkmen Brotherhood Club.

During the same period, there was a power struggle between the two major Kurdish parties, the KDP and PUK, to take control of the safe zone which turned into a military conflict. Massoud Barzani, the leader of the KDP forces who wanted to enter Erbil, which was controlled by the PUK, led by Jalal Talabani, made an agreement with Saddam Hussein, and the Iraqi army intervened in Erbil on 31 August 1996 along with the Barzani forces.<sup>46</sup> Turkmen parties were also negatively affected by

<sup>46</sup> Sadun Köprülü, "31 Ağustos 1996, Mesut Barzani ve Erbil Katliamı" [31 August 1996 Massoud Barzani and Erbil Massacre], Biz Türkmeniz, 7 September 2011, <http://www.bizturkmeniz.com/tr/index.php?page=article&id=22711>, (Accessed: 15 April 2020)



this intervention and some offices of the ITF were captured by the KDP. The ITF, which lost its influence with the intervention of the Iraqi army and stopped its activities for a short time, decided to hold a congress with the goal of restructuring. In September 1997, the ITF Chairman Sinan Çelebi was dismissed from his position with the decision of the ITF Disciplinary Board, signed by Riyaz Sarıkahya.<sup>47</sup>



<sup>47</sup> ITC decision of September 1997

The problems of the transition period of Turkmen politics were expressed in the decision. The process for holding the congress started in order to eliminate these problems. Preparations for the congress were carried out by the preparatory committee to enable the participation of Turkmen living both inside and outside Iraq.

### The First Turkmen Congress

A convention held in Turkey on July 23, 1997 by The Turkmeneli Cooperation and Cultural Foundation was attended by two members from each of the following organizations: the INTM, The Turkmeneli Party, The Turkmen Independent Movement, The Turkmen Brotherhood Club, The Turkmeneli Cooperation and Cultural Foundation and The Iraqi Turks Culture and Solidarity Association. Planning of the Grand Congress was completed with the meeting of the Preparatory Committee on September 17 and 18, 1997. Accordingly, the First Turkmen Congress convened on 4-7 October 1997 in Erbil.

The First Turkmen Congress, during which the new leadership of the ITF was selected and its statutes were written, the members of the Turkmen Council were elected, and the "Declaration of Basic Principles" was announced, can be regarded as one of the most important steps taken in Turkmen political history.

In addition, with the aforementioned Congress, the slogan "From Tel Afar to Mendeli" was adopted to designate the boundaries of the geographical area as a Turkmen homeland which later was called Turkmeneli.

### The Second Turkmen Congress

The Second Turkmen Congress was held in Erbil on 20-22 November 2000 during which the basic principles declaration adopted in the First Congress was updated and the ITF Statute was revised. Congress elected the members of The Turkmen Council, who in turn elected the ITF chairman and the board of directors. Accordingly, Sanan Ağa Kasap from The Turkmen Brotherhood Club became the new chairman of the ITF.

The final statement published at the end of the Second Turkmen Congress emphasized that Turkmen were pressured and even forced to give up their national identity, and through the Arabization policies were being subjected to forced migration and being assimilated. In addition, the final statement indicated that the Congress condemned the Iraqi government's policies and discussed the measures to be taken.

The regime change in Iraq in 2003 and the ITF's exclusion from Iraqi politics led the ITF to restructure. In the meantime, the time had come for the next Turkmen Congress, which is held every three years, according to the ITF bylaws.

### The Third Turkmen Congress

After the US forces entered Baghdad on April 9, 2003 and overthrew the Saddam Hussein regime, the ITF opened offices in Kirkuk and its surroundings, which is defined as the center of the Turkmen, and moved its headquarters to Kirkuk. Although there was an agreement that all armed groups would remain outside Kirkuk, the Peshmerga entered the city. Accordingly, the ITF tried to reposition itself and held the Third Turkmen Congress in Kirkuk on 12-15 September 2003 with the participation of five hundred delegates under the slogan "Democracy to Iraq, Full Rights for Turkmen." Receiving 264 votes, Faruk Abdullah Abdurrahman, the ITF's Baghdad office director was elected the ITF

Chairman, while the other candidate, the Kirkuk office director, Sadettin Ergeç, received 202 votes. Thus, Faruk Abdullah Abdurrahman became the new leader of the ITF.

The Third Turkmen Congress was an ordinary congress like the previous two. However, the level of participation was different from previous ones in that participants were from all regions of Iraq whereas before Turkmen from the regions under Saddam Hussein's control could not attend. At this congress, The Turkmen Council was renamed The Turkmen Assembly and its number of members was increased from 30 to 71. However, the move of the headquarters from Erbil to Kirkuk negatively affected the ITF, both deteriorating its organizational structure and its political effectiveness in Baghdad and its influence was limited to Turkmen regions.

After the Third Turkmen Congress, there were ruptures within the ITF. The majority of the delegates from Erbil left the Front. Furthermore, when the KDP and PUK declared the safe zone in the north of Iraq as the "Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government" and the Turkmen regions were also included in the maps drawn by this administration, the ITF became weak and its political activism in the north of Iraq was hindered. Thus, the ITF decided to restructure its organization in Iraq and started to open representative offices in provinces with Turkmen settlements outside the safe zone. In addition, the central branch of The Turkmen Brotherhood Club, which was under the control of the Baathists from 1980s until 2003, joined the ITF at this congress.

### The Fourth Turkmen Congress

Although the congresses are held every three years according to the ITF bylaws, the ITF was given a one-year trial period in the Third Turkmen Congress due to the move of the ITF headquarters from Erbil to Kirkuk. For this reason, a preparatory commission was formed by the ITF in February 2005, but no work could be done due to the problems within the ITF. The Turkmen Assembly convened on 14 April 2005 to evaluate the process and dissolved the preparatory commission. The decision was made to hold the Fourth Turkmen Congress with the delegates of the Third Turkmen Congress considering that it would take a lot of time to appoint new delegates and to reduce the number of approximately 550 delegates to 350. However, The Turkmeneli Party and The Turkmen Independents Movement withdrew from the ITF declaring the number of delegates as insufficient. In addition, the chairman of The Turkmeneli Party, Riyaz Sarkahya, stated that dialogue with the Kurds should be developed and that they support the Brussels Model put forward for Kirkuk by Jalal Talabani, which was a clear expression of their difference with the ITF.<sup>48</sup>

Despite all the setbacks, the Fourth Turkmen Congress started on April 24, 2005. On the first day, a council to lead the congress was elected with Muzaffer Arslan as the chairman. Nine commissions were formed to examine issues such as bylaws, education and political structure and to present them to the delegates in the congress.<sup>49</sup> In addition to the problems in the preparation phase of the convention, the disputes within the ITF further strained the relations among Turkmen political groups. The fact that there were 28 candidates competing for the chairmanship of the ITF was an indicator of the problems within the organization.<sup>50</sup> However, the competition between Sadettin Ergeç, the chairman of the Turkmen Assembly and Faruk Abdullah Abdurrahman, the Chairman of

<sup>48</sup> "Türkmenler Bölündü" [Turkmens Divided], *Milliyet*, 23 April 2005.

<sup>49</sup> Bilgay Duman, *Saddam Sonrası Dönemde Irak, Türkmenler ve Kerkük İlaq*, Turkmen and Kirkuk in post-Saddam Era], Unpublished Masters Thesis, Kırıkkale University, 2007, p. 79-83.

<sup>50</sup> "İttifak Arayan Türkmen Kurultayı, Başkanını Seçemedi Dağıldı" [Turkmen Congress Seeking Unity Disbanded Before Electing a Chairman], <http://www.tumgazeteler.com/?a=787034>, (Accessed: 24 September 2011)

the ITF dominated the congress. To ease the tension, the council postponed the congress.<sup>51</sup> The Fourth Turkmen Congress was re-convened in the first week of June and in the meantime, new members were elected to The Turkmen Assembly and Sadettin Ergeç was elected as the chairman.

### The Fifth Turkmen Congress

In 2008, despite starting preparations, the ITF failed to hold its congress within the period stipulated by the ITF bylaws. This angered the party leaders within the Front and demanded the congress to convene immediately. Entering the office of the chairman of the ITF, they stated that the ITF leadership and Sadettin Ergeç had lost their legitimacy and demanded a new convention be held.

In this tense atmosphere, the congress convened in Kirkuk on 13 July 2008. Five hundred and fifty delegates from Baghdad, Diyala, Salahaddin, Kirkuk, Erbil, Mosul and Tel Afar elected the members of The Turkmen Assembly. The ITF Chairman Sadettin Ergeç was re-elected with 44 votes out of 51, while his competitor, Turkmen Assembly member Hasan Turan, received only 4 votes. Yunus Bayraktar was re-elected as the chairman of The Turkmen Assembly by a majority vote. In addition, whereas at the Congress held in 2005, the party leaders within the ITF had become members of the executive board, in 2008, it was constituted by the provincial office chairs appointed by the ITF leadership. With this decision, the ITF ceased to be an umbrella organization and became a stand-alone party.

Accordingly, in preparation for the local elections to be held in 2009, the ITF applied to the Iraqi Independent Supreme Election Commission in late 2008 and declared itself as a political party. In this context, The Turkmen Independents Movement, The National Turkmen Party, The Nationalist Turkmen Community, The Turkmen Islamic Movement and The Turkmen Justice Party were separated from the ITF. In addition, many parties that left the ITF withdrew their members from The Turkmen Assembly and did not participate in its activities.

Erşat Salihi, who served as the ITF Kirkuk Province Chairman in 2011 and was also a Kirkuk Deputy in the Iraqi Parliament, replaced Sadettin Ergeç as the ITF President. Erşat Salihi, who has been running the ITF for about 10 years, has submitted his resignation to the ITF Executive Board as of March 2021, and the ITF Executive Board has elected ITF Vice President Hasan Turan to replace Erşat Salihi as the chairman. Since then Turan is the Chairman of the ITF.

<sup>51</sup> Arslan, Muzaffer. (Consultant on Turkmen Affairs at the Presidency of Iraq). *Personal Interview*. 25 June 2007.







# **CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS**

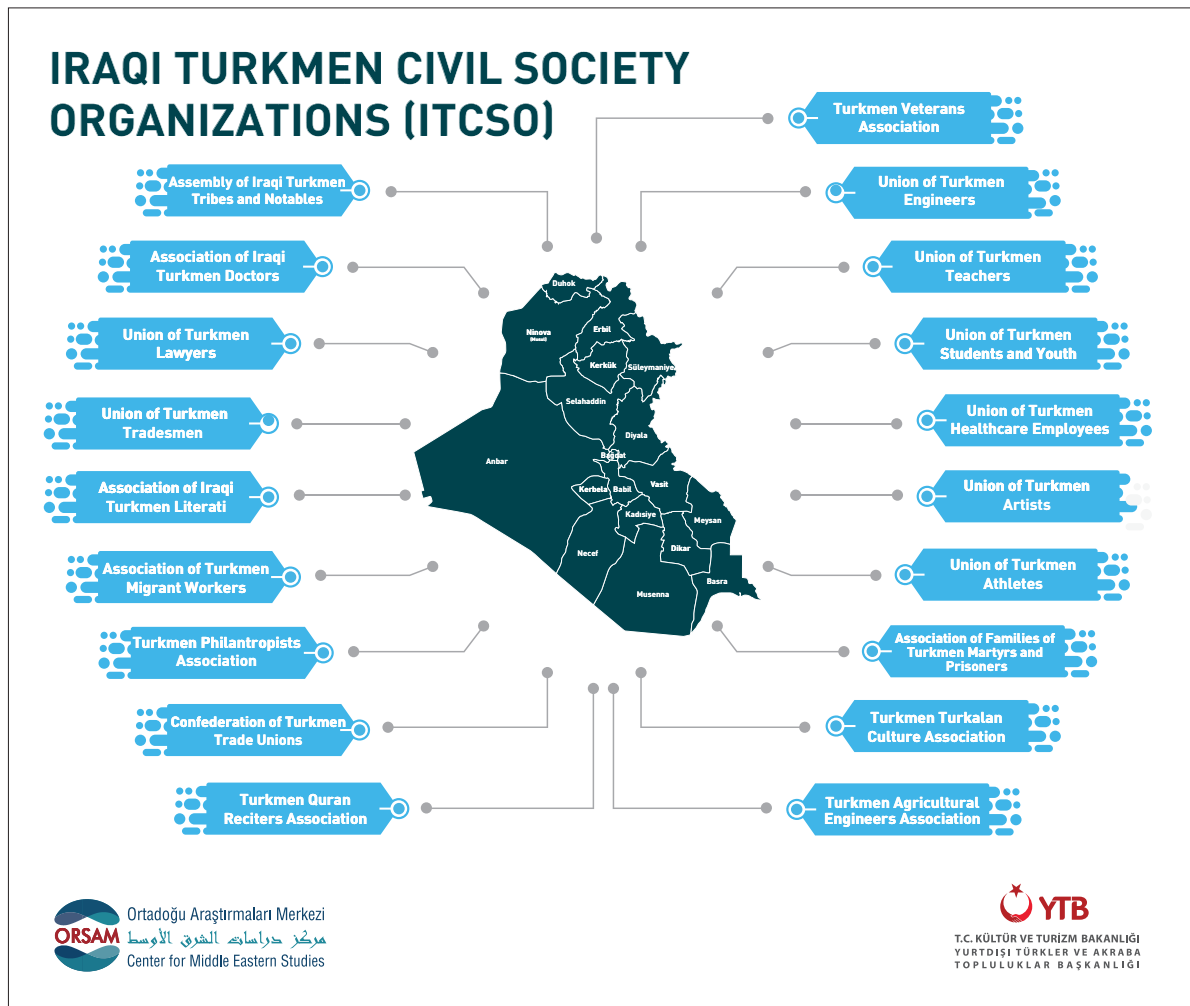
8

## CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS (CSOS)

The safe zone created in the north of Iraq after 1991 provided a window of opportunity for Turkmen to establish political and civil organizations. However, the CSOs founded were operating as amateur and local organizations so their areas of influence were limited and effectiveness was minimal. Their effectiveness was further restricted because the public took a dim view of these organizations due to the long-lasting dictatorial regime and approached them cautiously. Thus, lack of communication between the public and CSOs was exacerbated and reached a breaking point. Another reason for this was that the administrators of these organizations were not sufficiently competent. In addition, many of the Turkmen CSOs in Iraq are organized by and affiliated with a political organization. For this reason, Turkmen's perception of CSOs is political. For this reason, it would not be wrong to say that each CSO has formed its own base. As a result, it is difficult to say that civil society activities can be fully operational among the Turkmen people. Nevertheless, some successes have been achieved in the field of civil society.

### The Iraqi Turkmen Civil Society Organizations (ITCSO)

The Iraqi Turkmen Civil Society Organizations (ITCSO), which was established in 2007, can be described as a supreme organization formed by bringing together the various civil society



organizations affiliated with the ITF. The headquarters of all these CSOs are in Kirkuk and all receive support from the ITF. ITCISO acts both as the coordinator between the associations under its roof, but also as their supervisor and it maintains contacts with other domestic and foreign CSOs in Iraq. Due to the fact that there are no laws regulating the activities and structures of CSOs in Iraq, the ITCISO has been working to organize itself and the CSOs under its roof according to internationally recognized standards. However, though founded in 2007, ITCISO still has not been able to complete its organizational structure because of the unfavorable conditions in Iraq.

### Other Turkmen CSOs in Iraq

There are Turkmen CSOs operating outside the control of The Iraqi Turkmen Civil Society Organization (ITCISO). The table below shows the major organizations operating at regional and/or local level.

OTHER TURKMEN CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS IN IRAQ	
Peace Turkmen Migrants Association	Kirkuk Barracks Iraqi Turkmen Martyrs' Families and Political Prisoners Association
Deniz Turkmen Women Association	Kirkuk Turkmen Folklore and Artists Association
Al-Mustakbel Development Organization	Kışla Human Development Association
Al- Rafidain Public Improvement and Development Association	Nema Human Development Organization
Al-Rafah Humanitarian Aid Association	Middle East Support for Women Fund
Grandchildren of Fatih Association	Salam Tel Afar Culture and Teachers Association
Hatun Culture Association	Tel Afar Castle Culture Association
Crescent Public Health Association	Turkmen Religious Functionaries Association
Iraqi Turkmen Educator and Teachers Organization	Turkmen Right Association
Iraqi Turkmen Workers Association	Turkmeneli Solidarity and Culture Foundation
Iraqi Turkmen Women Humanitarian and Aid Association	Turkmeneli Women Association
Iraqi Turkmen Student and Youth Association	Turkmen Law and Justice Kirkuk Association
İhsan Doğramacı Erbil Foundation	Turkmen Brotherhood Club
Castle Human Rights Organization	Turkmen Rescue Association
Kirkuk Castle Orphans Association	







## MEDIA OUTLETS

# 9

## MEDIA OUTLETS

As one of the constitutive components of Iraq, the Turkmen are an essential part of the cultural and social fabric of the country. Being kept away from politics led Turkmen to focus on social and cultural studies. Many Turkmen artists and writers have become prominent throughout Iraq and the books, magazines and newspapers published by Turkmen still are widely known and followed. However, the involvement of Turkmen in the political sphere after 2003 has also politicized the Turkmen media. The magazines and newspapers that are published have transformed into the media organs of political parties and only a small number of independent newspapers and magazines remain.

Turkmen and Turkish language have had an important place in every stage of the history of the press in Iraq. *Zevra*, the first newspaper published in Iraq in 1869 during the Ottoman period, was issued weekly in Turkish and Arabic and managed by Ahmet Mithat Efendi. Then, in 1911, the weekly *Havadis* Newspaper started to be published in Turkish and Arabic by Muhammed Zeki Kutsizade in Kirkuk. In 1913, the *Maarif* (Education) Magazine was published in Turkish by Ahmet Medeni Kutsizade. Following their occupation of Ottoman lands, the British, who settled in Iraq started to publish the *El-Necme* (Star) Newspaper" in Kirkuk. Its first issue of which was published in Arabic. Later it was renamed *Necme* and was only published in Turkish on the grounds that Arabic is not common in Kirkuk. The *Necme* was published with the same name until 1926 but was later transferred to the control of the Kirkuk Municipality and took the name, the Kirkuk Newspaper," and continued in Turkish until 1972. Again in 1920, *Teceddüt* (Renewal) newspaper was published in Turkish, but after four issues the newspaper was closed.

As can be seen, the Turkmen had an important role in the history of Iraqi media and continued to do so after Iraq gained its independence in 1932. While many newspapers and magazines were published by the Turkmen after this date, the same cannot be said about radio and television. The fact that radio and television costs were higher than print media activities was a major factor for this. Nevertheless, Turkmen-owned radio and television stations are set up though under the control of political parties. At this point, it would be appropriate to briefly touch upon the media activities of Turkmen in Iraq.

### Print Media

After the declaration of independence in Iraq in 1932, *İleri* (Advanced), the first Turkmen newspaper published weekly, closed only after 16 issues. In 1954, the *Afak* (Horizons) newspaper was launched by Şakir Hürmüzlü and published in Turkish and Arabic until the Kirkuk Massacre in 1959. Soon before this newspaper closed down, Habib Hürmüzlü, Ata Terzibaşı and Muhammed Hacı İzzet launched the *Beşir*, which became one of the most well-known newspapers in Iraq. *Beşir* published its first issue on September 23, 1958 and continued for twenty-six issues published as eight pages in Turkish and eight pages in Arabic until the lead writers Muhammed Hacı İzzet and Habib Hürmüzlü were arrested on March 17, 1959. The "El-Iraq Newspaper" was published in Turkish and Arabic by Şakir Sabır Zabit in Baghdad between 1966 and 1967. Later in 1970, following the order of the "Cultural Rights of Turkmen" by the Ba'ath regime, Abdullatif Benderoğlu, a member of the Ba'ath Party started publishing the *Yurt* (The Homeland) newspaper with support of the Ministry of Culture. The *Yurt* newspaper was published only in Turkish, had 1310 issues until 2003 and was closed down after the fall of the Saddam regime. The *Turkmeneli* Newspaper, which was published in Erbil in Turkish by the National Turkmen Party in 1994 and transferred to the ITF after its founding in 1995, is

still published weekly under the leadership of Necat Kevseroğlu. The *El-Delil* newspaper was launched in 1991 and is owned by the Turkmen Islamic Union.

After 2003, many newspapers started to be published by Turkmen political parties. However, there is no Turkmen daily, most of them are weekly or biweekly newspapers. The *Turkmeneli* newspaper is published by the ITF, *Aksu* in Turkish and Arabic by the ITF's Saladin Provincial Office, the *Al-Masir* newspaper in Arabic by the Diyala Provincial Office, and the *Kale* in Arabic by the Baghdad Office. Since 2004, The Turkmen Justice Party publishes a biweekly newspaper called *Tercüman* (The Translator) mainly in Arabic and with only the cover page in Turkish. Another biweekly *Vefa* (The Loyalty) newspaper is published by the Turkmen Wafa Movement in Turkish and Arabic. The "Turkmen Road" biweekly newspaper of the Iraqi Turkmen Nation Party has been published in Arabic since 2006. The newspaper, *Kardeşlik Yolu*, (The Path of Brotherhood) is published biweekly in Arabic by The Turkmen Brotherhood Party. These newspapers report on the political organizations they are owned by and on Iraq news. The *Saray* (Palace) newspaper was launched in 2006 in Erbil and is published biweekly by İmat Rifat in Turkish and Kurdish and follows the activities of the İhsan Doğramacı Erbil Foundation as well as Turkmen news. In addition, the Erbil Newspaper published by the Erbil Turkmen List had thirty issues until its closure in 2017. The *Şafak* (Dawn) newspaper, which has twenty-two issues since 2007, is published once a month by Mehmet Haşim Salihi. It can be said that the newspaper, *Şafak*, the first and only full Turkish newspaper in Iraq, is perhaps the most independent of all. The *Sad El Afra* newspaper is published weekly in Arabic in Tel Afar since 2009. In addition, the *Doğuş* (Birth) newspaper published by The National Turkmen Party, the *Karar* (The Decision) newspaper published by the Decision Party and the "Bağımsız" (The Independent) newspaper published by the Turkmen Independent Movement have ceased their publications.

There are also many magazines published by Turkmen organizations which are generally art and literature journals. *Kardeşlik* (Brotherhood) is the oldest Turkmen media organ published in Turkish and Arabic by The Turkmen Brotherhood Club since 1961 with occasional disruptions. The monthly literature and culture magazine *Bayrak* (Flag) has been published since 2009 by the Mosul Branch of The Turkmen Brotherhood Club. The literature and art magazine, *Turkmeneli*, has been published in Turkish and Arabic on a monthly basis consistently since 2007 by the ITF. The *Kerkük* Magazine has been published in Turkish and Arabic by The Union of Turkmen Literati since 2003. The Turkmen Teachers Union has been publishing the monthly magazine *Fener* (The Lantern) in Turkish and Arabic for the last seven years with topics related to education and Turkmen culture. The *Kurtuluş* Magazine (The Salvation) has been published in Turkish and Arabic since 2005 by The Association of Iraqi Turkmen Prisoners and Martyrs' Families. It emphasizes national issues and includes articles on Turkmen martyrs. Also Erbil Newspaper, published by Mahmut Çelebi, includes pieces about Turkmen martyrs. The *Al-Muharip* Magazine, which is published by The Turkmen Veterans Union in Arabic and Turkish since 2009 covers military and national issues. The Grandchildren of Fatih Association, the youth branch organization of The Justice Party has been publishing the magazine, *Kalem* (The Pen), since 2005. The magazine, which includes articles related to the problems of the Turkmen youth and students and literary works, used to be in Turkish and Arabic and now is only in Arabic. Another monthly newspaper is published by the women's branches of The Turkmen Justice Party is published in Arabic featuring articles about Turkmen women. Lastly, the monthly Turkish language journal *Gökbörü* has been published in Erbil since 1991.



## The Turkmen Press Agency-TPA



The Turkmen Press Agency (TPA) was established on June 1, 2017 with the slogan "For You With You" in Erbil. The first issue of the newspaper published by the agency was bilingual, delivering news in Turkish and Kurdish, on June 11, 2017. According to Mehmet Ferit Erbilöglü, the founder of the TPA, the eight-pointed star logo of the agency refers to the most prominent motif used by Seljuk culture and arts, representing "compassion, affection, patience, honesty, trustworthiness, loyalty, knowing one's poverty and helplessness, and being grateful to the Lord." The TPA launched the [www.tbajansi.com](http://www.tbajansi.com) as of 1 July 2017 with content in Turkish and Kurdish. The agency, which started with photo journalism, continues its preparations to transition to video journalism.

In addition to newspaper and internet reporting, the TPA publishes a magazine called "The TPA Çocuk-Kid." This children's magazine has a wide readership in Erbil and Kirkuk and is used by Turkmen kindergartens in Erbil. Also, upon the request of Turkmen schools, a Turkish story book was prepared by the TPA and distributed with the contribution of The Turkmen Cultural Center.

In addition, the TPA publishes Turkmen authors' books under the name, TPA Publications. Turkmen poet İdris Halup's book, "*İlk Petek*," (The First Honeycomb) was the first book published. Then Professor Mehmet Ömer Kazancı's book on Turkmen literature named "*Hıştılar*" (Rustling) was published. Thirdly, the new book of poet Adnan Kasapoğlu, named "*Duyu*" (Sense) was published.

## Audiovisual Media

It is not possible to see Turkmen in audio and visual media as much as in print media. The first Turkmen radio broadcast in Iraq was the half-hour program in 1959 by Baghdad Radio of the Iraqi State. Later, Turkish broadcasts on Baghdad Radio were increased. In the same period, a Turkmen section was established on Kirkuk Television, The Iraqi State Television. Turkmeneli TV, which started broadcasting in 2004, operates Turkmen FM Radio broadcasting in Turkish with the aim of preserving Turkmen national culture. The Association of Iraqi Turkmen Brotherhood and Culture has a Sumerian Radio broadcasting for Kirkuk and its surroundings. Founded in 2008, Sumerian Radio broadcasts for eight hours, one hour in Arabic, and aims to instill a love of the homeland and Islamic consciousness in Iraqis. Erbil Radio launched in December 2013, broadcasts in Erbil and Kirkuk and produces political programs addressing Turkmen affairs in addition to social and cultural content. There is also "*Türkmenevi*" (Turkmen House) Radio set up in Erbil in 2016 by the General Directorate of Turkmen Culture and Art, of the KRG Ministry of Culture broadcasting mostly Turkmen cultural content.

## The Türkmeneli Satellite TV



Turkmeneli (land of the Turkmen) Satellite Television (Turkmeneli TV) started its broadcast in Kirkuk in 2004. The TV director is Hanefi Uzunçam. Operating as a 24 hour broadcasting TV channel, Turkmeneli TV produces nearly 20 programs in Turkish and Arabic covering a variety of topics including health, music, religion and politics as well as four hours of daily news. With a nationalist vision, and the slogan "the bright face of Iraq," Turkmeneli TV produces programs for a Turkmen audience about Iraq with reporters in every province of Iraq. It has transmitters in Kirkuk, Baghdad, Tel Afar, Mosul, Diyala and Saladin. In addition, there is a local affiliate of Turkmeneli TV operating in Tel Afar. Turkmeneli TV

employs 103 people and has three studios where most of its programming is produced, but also broadcasts many programs from Turkey according to the protocol signed with TRT and the Kirkuk News Agency. In addition, Turkmeneli TV has agreements signed with Al Iraqiya and Al Forat.

### **The Turkmeneli Radio and Television**



The Turkmeneli Radio Television (TERT) first started broadcasting as a radio in 1996. Later in 2003, TERT moved to Kirkuk and opened its local television channel in the same year. Operating with an old system, TERT broadcasts to Kirkuk and surrounding settlements. Broadcasting entirely in Turkish, TERT broadcasts using the Latin script. The broadcast quality of TERT, which mostly includes cultural and political discussion programs, is still low.

### **The Turkmen TV**



It was established under the name of "al-Turkmaniyah" with the decision of the Iraqi Council of Ministers in 2013, under the Iraqi Media Network. On 10 July 2013, Turkmen TV started broadcasting over Nilesat and Arabsat satellites. The channel started test broadcasts for six hours a day and later started 24 hour uninterrupted broadcasts on 15 June 2014. Although the channel's headquarters is in Baghdad, it has offices in Kirkuk, Tal Afar and Tuz Khurmatu, and correspondents in Diyala and broadcasts mostly from Kirkuk. In addition, the name of the channel that broadcasts cultural, religious, political, sports and music programs was changed to Turkmen TV in 2018.





## **TURKMENS IN IRAQI POLITICS**

# 10



## TURKMENS IN IRAQI POLITICS

The establishment of a no-fly zone in the north of Iraq after 1991 and a de-facto autonomous region under the administration of the KDP and PUK, allowed Iraqi opposition groups including Turkmens to mobilize. During this period, many Turkmen parties and non-governmental organizations were founded. However, the lack of political experience led Turkmens to fall under the influence of a variety of actors. Different Turkmen groups were used against each other and even clashed from time to time.

It is possible to say that the history of Turkmen political movement in Iraq is very new for a political movement. The Turkmen National Democratic Organization, founded in Syria in 1980, stands out as the first political movement of the Turkmen. However, this organization survived for a very short time and was dissolved in 1985. The National Turkmen Party, which was established in Turkey in 1988 but was able to declare itself in 1991, can be expressed as the first Turkmen party. After the National Turkmen Party, several Turkmen parties were established, but in order to prevent this disorganization, the Iraqi Turkmen Front (ITF) was established in 1995 with the support of Turkey, and it was aimed to bring the Turkmen parties together under one roof. During the establishment phase, the National Turkmen Party, the Turkmeneli Party, the Turkmen Independents Movement, the Turkmen Islamic Movement, the Turkmeneli Foundation and the Turkmen Brotherhood Association were brought together. However, the current structure of the ITF has differentiated, and the political parties within the ITF have split. In 2008, the ITF registered itself as a separate party in Iraq. The ITF is the largest and most influential organization representing the Turkmens in Iraq today.

### The Iraqi Elections

Following the US invasion in March 2003, the state structure of Iraq has fundamentally changed. The Kurds and Shia Arabs, who were the closest US allies during the invasion, emerged as the main actors in post-Saddam Iraq, and the new political order in Iraq was built accordingly. The Sunni Arabs, who were in power during the Saddam era, retreated to a defensive position and emerged as the opposition group within the political structure the US imposed. The ITF could not position itself within the new administration, neither could it join the opposition in Iraq. Relations between Turkey and the US were strained when the Grand National Assembly rejected a resolution authorizing the US troops to enter Iraq through Turkey on March 1, 2003. Since Turkey could not play an active role in the reconstruction process in Iraq, Turkmens were also left out. Turkmen political representation in the new political structure has remained quite low. The inability of the Turkmens to act as a single group and the ITF's inadequacy in this regard also reduced the influence of the Turkmens in Iraq.

On 5 July 2003, the interim Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) was announced. Among the 25 members selected to the IGC from prominent opposition figures in Iraq were 13 Shiite Arabs, 5 Sunni Arabs, 5 Kurds, 1 Christian and 1 Turkmen. Songül Çabuk, the only Turkmen member of the IFC was not affiliated with the ITF. Thus, it can be said that the ITF did not achieve benefits from acting with Saddam opposition groups in Iraq since 1995 and was excluded from Iraqi politics.

During this period, the pressures on the ITF also increased. On 21 August 2003, the Peshmerga demolished the Imam Musa Ali Tomb, which was considered important for the Turkmens, and thereupon, Turkmens organized protests on 22 August 2003 after the Friday prayer. When the group of about 250 people started marching through the town shouting slogans, the Talabani controlled Peshmerga opened fire on them with automatic rifles and killed Remzi Marufoğlu, Hüseyin Abbas,

Ahmet Hüseyin Bayatlı, Eşref Mushar, Muhammet Haşim, Çetin Abidin Çayır and one other person and injured 12 Turkmens too.<sup>52</sup> The protests continued until the next day, blood was mixed again, and the Peshmerga of the PUK, wearing police uniforms, killed 3 Turkmens.<sup>53</sup> On August 24, 2003, American soldiers raided the ITF office and confiscated some weapons. These events worried the US, which was dealing with complex problems in Iraq and decided to hold a "Peace Meeting" between Kurdish groups and the Turkmens. Representatives of PUK and the ITF, Kirkuk Governor Abdulrahman Mustafa and US officials attended this meeting held on August 26, 2003.<sup>54</sup> Sadettin Ergeç and Mustafa Kemal Yayçılı on behalf of the ITF and Feryad Ömer from The Turkmen Wafa Movement participated in the meeting. The announcement was made that a six-point agreement was signed.

These items are stated as follows:<sup>55</sup>

- 1- Both parties condemn the events taking place in Kirkuk and Tuz Khurmatu.
- 2- Both parties have agreed to establish a new committee to investigate the events, find those responsible and bring them to court.
- 3- Both parties call on Arab, Kurdish, Turkmens, Assyrian and other groups to live in Iraq in peace and brotherhood.
- 4- Financial and moral support will be provided to the wounded and their families.
- 5- Both parties have agreed to establish a new committee and to set up a "resolution room" for its use in order to solve problems immediately.
- 6- Both parties have agreed to hold joint meetings regularly in order to preserve relations and discuss political, social and national issues.

Although a new glimmer of hope emerged for the Turkmens after the fall of the Saddam regime in 2003, the Turkmens were not given a role in Iraq restructured by the US. The new political balance of power in Iraq and the ethnic and religious divisions negatively affected the Turkmen community.

Turkmens have participated in all elections held in Iraq since 2003 and worked hard to establish themselves as a prominent political force in Iraqi politics.

## 2005 Parliamentary Elections

The elections were held on 30 January 2005 in Iraq for a Transitional National Assembly. The ITF received 93,408 votes in Iraq and 73,791 votes in Kirkuk, winning 3 seats out of 275. Faruk Abdullah Abdurrahman, Riyaz Sarıkahya and Feyha Zeynel Abidin of the ITF became deputies. The ITF did not secure a ministry in the cabinet established by Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari. There were Turkmens who ran as candidates on the lists of other political groups as well. Five Turkmens became deputies from the United Iraqi Alliance, which included Iraq's Shiite political parties, and four from the joint list of Kurdish parties.

<sup>52</sup> Şeyhmus Çakan, "Peşmerge Katliamı" [Peshmerga Massacre], Milliyet, 23 August 2003

<sup>53</sup> Zeynep Tuğrul, "Kerkük'te Korkulan Oldu" [Fears were Realized in Kirkuk], Sabah, 24 August 2003.

<sup>54</sup> "Kerkük Huzur Arıyor" [Kirkuk Seeking Peace], Radikal, 27 August 2003.

<sup>55</sup> Anadolu Agency, 27 August 2003.

After long-lasting negotiations, the new government was approved by the National Assembly of Iraq on 28 April 2005. Within the Prime Minister İbrahim al-Jaafari's cabinet which consisted of 37 members, only two ministries were assigned to Turkmens. Jassim Jaafar from the United Iraqi Alliance (Shiite) became Construction and Housing Minister and Nasreen Mustafa Berwari became Municipalities and Public Works Minister.<sup>56</sup>

According to the Transitional Administration Law of Iraq, the newly established government and the elected assembly were to write a permanent constitution of Iraq by August 15, 2005. Thus, the Transitional National Assembly appointed a Constitutional Committee which originally had fifty-five members. However, afterwards, it was expanded to include 15 Sunnis and one member of the Sabi sect. Twenty-eight of the members of the committee were selected from the United Iraqi Alliance. The remaining twenty-seven members included fifteen Kurds, one Christian and two Sunnis, one of whom was an independent and the other was a member of the Iraqi National List led by Ayad Allawi.<sup>57</sup> Ten consultants served on the committee.<sup>58</sup> Turkmens were represented by two members; Riyaz Sarikahya, the chairman of The Turkmeneli Party, and Abbas Al-Beyati, the chairman of The Turkmen Islamic Union and a United Iraqi Alliance member. The fact that neither was elected as Turkmen candidates, and both were Shiite reflected the political atmosphere of the period in Iraq. Also, there were no other Turkmen intellectuals or leaders other than Riyaz Sarikahya who applied for committee membership. This situation revealed on the one hand the Turkmens' attitude towards politics in Iraq, and on the other hand the government's view of the Turkmens during this period. While the US was working to include Sunnis in the political process and seeking Turkey's help in this regard, it kept Turkmens out of the process and only allocated them to a position of a "minority." Nevertheless, Turkmens were included within the framework of fundamental rights in the constitution writing process. The new constitution was accepted in a referendum on 15 October 2005 by 78.59 percent.<sup>59</sup>

After the ratification of the constitution, preparations to hold elections on December 15, 2005 began for the Iraqi Council of Representatives who would serve for four years. The ITF decided to run their own list of candidates for the elections. However, it allied itself with the Iraqi Accord Front only in the Mosul province. The ITF ran for elections in Kirkuk, Mosul, Erbil, Diyala, Saladin and Baghdad. The ITF participated in the elections in Saladin governorate because the district of Tuz Khurmatu, with a majority Turkmen population, had been carved out of Kirkuk province and became part of Saladin. The ITF Saladin Provincial Chairman Ali Haşim Muhtaroglu was nominated there.<sup>60</sup> The ITF candidates were positioned in the fourth and the eighth place on the list of the Iraqi Accord Front. The ITF nominated İzzettin Devle as the fourth place candidate and Muhammed Emin Osman as the eighth candidate. The Turkmen Decision Party, founded by the former ITF Chairman Faruk Abdullah Abdurrahman, joined Ahmad Chalabi's coalition to contest the election, while The Turkmen Waha Movement led by Feryad Ömer and The Iraqi Turkmen Islamic Union led by Abbas al-Beyati were part of The United Iraqi Alliance, which was the winner of January 2005 elections. In addition, despite the conflict between Kurdish groups and Turkmens, The Turkmen Brotherhood Party, led by Velid Şerike, entered the elections within The Kurdish Alliance. The ITF received 87,993 votes and

<sup>56</sup> "İrak Meclisinden Kabineye Onay" [Cabinet Approved by Iraqi Assembly] <http://www.cnntrk.com/2005/dunya/04/28/irak.meclisinden.kabineye.onay/91688.0/index.html>, Accessed: 20 March 2010.

<sup>57</sup> Sabrina Tavernise ve Abdul Razzaq Al-Saiedy "The Struggle For Iraq: Politics; Sunnis to accept offer of a role in a Constitution", The New York Times, 17 June 2005.

<sup>58</sup> Kenneth Katzman, "Iraq: Elections, Government, and Constitution", CRS Report for Congress, 30 March 2006, p. 3.

<sup>59</sup> "İrak Anayasası onaylandı" [Iraq Constitution Approved], Hürriyet, 25 October 2005, <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/dunya/irak-anayasasi-onaylandi-3436316>, (Accessed: 15 April 2020)

<sup>60</sup> Fikret Bila, "İrak Seçiminde Türkmenler Üç Parça" [Turkmen in three pieces in Iraqi elections], Milliyet, 6 December 2005, <https://www.milliyet.com.tr/yazarlar/fikret-bila/irak-seciminde-turkmenler-uc-parca-137556>, (Accessed: 15 April 2020)

gained one seat from Kirkuk. The Kurdish List obtained the highest number of votes with 266.737 votes in Kirkuk. The Iraqi Front for National Dialogue took the second place with 73.191 votes. The ITF, on the other hand, received 59.716 votes and became the third party in Kirkuk. Along with ITF President Sadettin Ergeç, nine Turkmens from other parties entered the Iraqi National Council of Representatives: İzzettin Devle and Muhammed Emin Osman from the Iraqi Accord Front list, Abbas al-Beyati from the United Iraq Alliance list, Jassim Jaafar, Taki El-Mevla, Muhammed Mehdi Beyati, Fevzi Ekrem Terzi and Feryad Ömer, and Velid Şerike from the Kurdish Alliance. The United Iraqi Alliance won the elections but was able to form a government after five months of negotiations. In Iraq's first non-provisional government formed by Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, Turkmens could only be represented by one ministry. Jassim Jaafar was appointed as the Minister of Youth and Sports.

### 2010 Parliamentary Elections

Following the local elections in 2009, preparations for parliamentary elections were started in the country. In this context, the ITF was also in search of an alliance. The Turkmen community was divided politically in the lead up to the elections. Turkey took steps to help overcome these divisions including the *Iftar* dinner given by President Abdullah Gül that brought together representatives of all Turkmen organizations including the ITF. However, the common view adopted at the meeting was to aim for increasing the number of Turkmens in the Iraqi parliament regardless of their political and ideological views or identity in order to be able to form a parliamentary group. Right after the meeting, some Turkmen organizations joined larger political coalitions formed in Iraq. The ITF joined with the coalition called the *Al-Iraqiya* List headed by Ayad Allawi but ran in a separate list in Sulaymaniyah and Erbil governorates. The ITF received approximately one hundred and twenty-eight thousand votes across the country in the elections held on 7 March 2010. In Kirkuk, the ITF was able to receive approximately five thousand more votes than the December 2005 election, but was not able to reach its vote numbers from January 2005.

Following the election results, İzzettin Devle from Mosul, Nebil Harbo, Müdrike Ahmet, Erşat Salihi from Kirkuk, Jale Neftçi and Hasan Özmen from Diyala were elected as deputies. The ITF was given a position in the government for the first time since 2003 with Turhan Mufti becoming the State Minister Responsible for Provincial Affairs in the cabinet formed by Nouri al-Maliki.

After the establishment of the government in Iraq, the ITF started to work more intensively in the parliament in order to take a more active role in Iraqi and Turkmen politics. The Front formed a parliamentary group with other Turkmen MPs and together they worked to prevent acts of violence against Turkmens, especially focusing on Kirkuk. The ITF also made an effort to open a Directorate for Turkmen Education.

The Turkmens, who could not play a direct role in Iraqi politics, began to stand by the dominant players in the country. This led some people to completely stay away from politics, diminished its political power, and prevented the Turkmens from realizing their full potential. The elections held during the reconstruction process of Iraq have been the biggest indicator of this. However, the 2010 election results signaled that the Turkmen public is rising up again. The Turkmens won ten deputies and three ministries (the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of State Responsible for Provincial Affairs and the Ministry of Youth and Sports) for the first time in the 325-seat Council of Representatives of Iraq in 2010. Furthermore, Taki al-Mevla, who is a Turkmen, was appointed as the head of the Hajj and Umrah Commission, which is a ministerial level position in Iraq. In addition, the State Minister Responsible for the Provinces, Turhan Mufti, also served as the Deputy Minister of Communication between 2012 and 2014.

In 2012, Turkmens achieved a level of political success hitherto not reached in Iraqi political history. Though Turkmen politicians of the period, especially the ITF, had a share in this success, the political context, especially, the conflict between the KRG and the Iraqi central government contributed greatly to it. The softening of relations between the Turkmens and the Kurds in 2012 enabled Turkmens to make some political gains such as the appointment of Hasan Turan as the Chairman of Kirkuk Provincial Council and the re-opening of an ITF office in Erbil. In response to this, Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki used the power of the central government to keep the Turkmen on his side. In this process, the Turkmens have made gains such as the approval of a report containing Turkmen rights by a vote in the Iraqi parliament on 28 July 2012, which acknowledged the Turkmen as the third essential element of Iraq, and allocated shares from the Iraqi budget to be used in Turkmen regions. In other words, after Arabs and Kurds, Turkmens have been recognized as the nation with the largest population in Iraq. In addition, the General Directorate of Turkmen Education was founded and Turkmen language was promoted to the status of an official state language along with Arabic and Kurdish to be used by the Independent Supreme Election Commissioner. Although these gains have not yet brought any real benefit to the lives of the Turkmen people, receiving official recognition is important nevertheless.

Even though the Turkmen gained certain political and social rights in 2012, it was otherwise a very difficult year for the community. Direct attacks on Turkmen people, kidnappings for ransom, assassinations, and bomb attacks in Turkmen settlements, particularly Kirkuk and Tuz Khurmatu, continued throughout the year. While on the one hand the political conflict in Iraq brought political gains to the Turkmens, the security void caused by this conflict negatively affected this most vulnerable community in the country. The Iraqi central government's use of the security apparatus for political purposes, as well as its failure to provide sufficient security and protection to the Turkmen regions, exposed Turkmens to violent acts. Turkmen politicians' demands for protection from the Iraqi central government were left unfulfilled and the community started to take action in late 2012 to show their insistence on forming a Turkmen security force. In addition, demands for the creation of one or two governorates where Turkmen constitute the majority population were voiced, namely Tel Afer and Tuz Khurmatu.

## 2014 Parliamentary Elections

Iraq's first parliamentary elections since the withdrawal of US troops were held on April 30, 2014. Out of the nine thousand candidates and 277 parties running in the election, 34 parties/lists, a higher number than before, gained seats in the parliament. National voter turnout was announced as 60 percent comparable to prior ones. However, in Kirkuk, turnout was 68 percent which was lower than the turnout in 2010.

The political coalitions formed during the 2010 elections were broken. Whereas in 2010 Kurdish parties ran two grand lists, in 2014 they each ran in their separate lists. The Turkmen-Arab partnership from the 2010 elections did not continue in 2014. For this reason, the parties included in the al-Iraqiya List in 2010 lost two seats in the 2014 elections. The fact that the KDP and PUK ran in separate lists showed the distribution among Kurdish groups in Kirkuk. Necmeddin Kerim, a candidate from the PUK, attracted attention as the fourth candidate with the highest number of votes in the country, receiving 150 thousand votes. In the elections, Turkmens won 10 deputies in total, 3 of them from the ITF. However, Turkmens were not given a ministry in the government formed by Haydar el-Abadi.





### 2018 Parliamentary Elections

The 2018 elections were the first to be held after the end of ISIL's territorial rule. Two hundred and four parties and twenty-seven lists took part in the elections nationally. According to the election results, thirty-one parties / lists entered the parliament.

For Kirkuk, the 2018 parliamentary elections were also the first to be held after the removal of the Peshmerga from the city by the intervention of the Iraqi central government on 16 October 2017. It was during this time that the governor of Kirkuk, Najmaldin Karim, who was removed from office by Baghdad fled to Erbil, and Rakan Saeed al-Jabouri was appointed as acting governor. Thirty-one parties / lists, seven of which were independent candidates, ran in the elections in Kirkuk, with a competition among the three different ethnic groups in the province. Only three lists gained seats in the parliament. The PUK won six seats and the Kirkuk Arab Coalition and the Kirkuk Turkmen Front each won three seats. Since the KDP boycotted the elections in the disputed territories, Kurds lost two seats, so the parliamentary elections of 2018 yielded a similar distribution of seats to the 2010 elections.

In the first elections held in Nineveh after the end of the occupation of the terrorist organization ISIS, four Turkmen gained seats in parliament. In addition, one Turkmen from Baghdad and two Turkmen from Saladin won seats as well, making a total of ten seats.

## Elections of the KRG



After the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, the governorates of Erbil, Duhok and Sulaymaniyah were accepted as the federal region named the "Iraqi Kurdish Regional Government" in the constitution adopted by a referendum in 2005. The region was de-facto formed in 1991, when the north of the 36th parallel of Iraq was declared a no-fly zone, but gained official status by the new Iraqi constitution and the administration of the three provinces was left to the Kurdish parties. Thus, the provinces such as Erbil and Kifri, where Turkmens historically lived predominantly, came under the control of these parties and their demography started to change. Due to the historical Turkmen presence in the region, five seats in the KRG Parliament were reserved for Turkmens. However, in the KRG Parliamentary

elections, Turkmen parties supported by Kurdish parties won four of these five seats. In the 2005 KRG Parliamentary Elections, the Turkmen Democratic Movement won four seats.

ITF, the largest Turkmen party, did not participate in KRG Parliamentary elections until 2009. However, the ITF's Turkmen Reform List, won one seat in the KRG Parliament in that year's elections, while the Turkmen Democratic Movement won three seats, and the Erbil Turkmen list won one seat. In the sixth and seventh cabinets formed following the elections, Sinan Çelebi, who is a Turkmen, served as the minister of trade and industry.

In the 2013 KRG Parliamentary elections, the Turkmen Development List received two seats, and the Erbil Turkmen List, the Turkmen Change and Renewal List and the ITF won one seat each. Sinan Çelebi, served as the minister of justice in the 8th cabinet of the KRG formed after the elections.

Among the eight Turkmen lists that ran in the KRG Parliamentary elections held in 2018, only four lists won parliamentary seats. The Turkmen Development List sent two deputies, and the Turkmen Reform Party, ITF and the Nation List sent one seat each to the KRG Parliament. Aydın Maruf, who was elected as a deputy from the ITF, became the Regional Minister of the KRG in the cabinet.



# **SITUATION OF THE POST-ISIS TURKMEN REGIONS**

# 11





## SITUATION OF THE POST-ISIS TURKMEN REGIONS

A new period began for Turkmen when ISIS captured Mosul in 2014 and expanded its control throughout the regions they inhabit. More than six hundred thousand Turkmen had to flee their homes, especially from Tel Afar, Mosul, Tuz Khurmatu and its surroundings and Diyala. Most were internally displaced, while others migrated to Turkey. In addition to Mosul and Tel Afar, the areas of Tuz Khurmatu and Amirli in the province of Saladdin, Qara Tapa, Sehreban, Baladrooz, Miqdadiye, Jalawla in Diyala governorate, and villages of Kirkuk and settlements such as Daquq (Tavuk) and Tazehurmatu came under ISIS pressure. Examining each Turkmen region in more detail will enable us to grasp the immense Turkmen suffering since the emergence of ISIS.

### Kirkuk Governorate

After capturing Mosul, ISIS also launched an attack on Kirkuk and brought under its control the southern and southwestern regions of the governorate, especially areas where Sunni Arabs reside. ISIS already controlled the Hawija district of Kirkuk, with an almost entirely Sunni Arab population prior to attack on Mosul. Later, the townships and villages such as Abbasiye, Zap, Riyaz between Hawija and Kirkuk also came under ISIS occupation. In addition, the Turkmen village of Beshir in the south of Kirkuk was also captured by ISIS and Turkmen areas such as Tazehurmatu and Daquq became frontlines of the conflict. After most of the villages around Daquq fell into the hands of ISIS, the villages of Molla Abdulla, Mektep Halit, Meryembeg and Tel El Verd were eventually captured as well. From the Molla Abdullah region, which is only eight to ten km away from Kirkuk, ISIS attacked the city of Kirkuk, but was not able to enter it. However, a battle zone from the south and west to the northwest of the city about twelve to fifteen km from the center was created.

Faced with intense pressure of Kurdish groups since 2003, Kirkuk finally came under the control of the security forces and the Peshmerga affiliated with the Kurdish parties after the Iraqi Army left the city upon the capture of Mosul by ISIS. Security was maintained by the local (Kirkuk) police and Kurdish security forces in the Kirkuk city center, and the Peshmerga garrisoned the surrounding areas. However, the district of Hawija, with a Sunni Arab population remained under ISIS occupation,

only to be liberated in September 2017. While the Peshmerga mostly controlled the districts of Daquq and Dibis, the al-Hashd al-Shaabi (Popular Mobilization Forces) became active in Daquq. In addition, PKK terrorists were also deployed to Daquq, especially areas along the road to Sulaymaniya such as Kara Hanjar and Chamchamal around Kirkuk under the pretext of helping the Peshmerga against ISIS.

ISIS fired more than two hundred mortar shells and Katyusha missiles to Tazehurmatu sub-district over three days in March 2016, which mostly targeted the frontlines, but also hit civilian areas. It was detected that chlorine and mustard gas were used by ISIS during these attacks. Out of approximately forty thousand of the total Turkmen population of Tazehurmatu, seven thousand people were affected by these chemical attacks and had to be treated. One hundred and sixty-seven Turkmen with severe wounds were brought to Turkey for treatment.

ISIS' capture of Tazehurmatu, which was the point of resistance against ISIS' advances towards Kirkuk led to the closure of the Kirkuk-Baghdad road once again, and allowed ISIS to expand its zone of control on the north-south axis. Even after the liberation of the Hawija district, the ISIS threat in the province continued with surprise attacks in addition to regional control. During the ongoing conflict with ISIS, five hundred and nine houses were damaged in the village of Beshir, where approximately seven hundred and twenty families lived. While the people of Beshir repaired their damaged houses with their own means, the fight against ISIS caused trauma within the community claiming the lives of fifty-nine people and wounding one hundred and six civilians.

Other Turkmen villages with a traumatic history, namely Kumbetler, Beşir, Yayçı and Türkalan were destroyed in 1987 by the regime. After 2003, 100 homes in each the villages were built with Turkey's support allowing residents to return. In only 15 years since, the number of households has nearly tripled. In addition, there are an estimated 200 households in the village of Kızılyar.

Bulova was the first Turkmen village to be destroyed by the Baath regime in 1980. At the time, there were five hundred people living in ninety-eight households. As of 2019, six hundred and twenty-two people were living in one hundred and twenty-two households in Bulova. Similar to other Turkmen villages, villagers in Bulova maintain security with support from the federal police.

## Saladin Governorate

The Tuz Khurmatu- Kirkuk road within the borders of Saladin Governorate was under the complete control of the KRG until ISIS' advances in the region. Afterwards, al-Hashd al-Shaabi started its activities in this region. However, the Peshmerga presence along this road continued until the intervention of the federal government on October 16, 2017.

The Hamrin Mountain range extends to the east of Tuz Khurmatu as well. The border with Suleimaniah lies behind these mountains. Thus, the regions to the east of Tuz Khurmatu also have a Kurdish majority. In addition, the Tuz Khurmatu district has suffered the most serious damage from the Saddam regime's Arabization policy, when Turkmen were forcibly removed, and their property seized. Furthermore, some rumors suggest that the KRG has paid some Kurdish families to settle in the district after 2003. However, it is wrong to state that Kurds pursued a systematic policy of intimidation against the Turkmen in Tuz Khurmatu, because many Kurdish families who were settled there did not take a political stance and some even returned to their places of residence because the promises made by Kurdish political actors were not kept.





Tuz Khurmatu is especially important for the Turkmen for it was where their uprising against the Kurdish groups' entry into Kirkuk in 2003 started. Turkmen in Tuz Khurmatu, located on the strategically important Kirkuk-Baghdad road, have also put a strong resistance against ISIS attacks and have managed to survive in Tuz Khurmatu despite being the target of systematic terrorist attacks since 2011.

After the capture of Mosul and subsequently Tikrit, the ISIS pressure on Tuz Khurmatu increased. ISIS invaded Turkmen settlements known as "Bayat Obası" (A Settlement) in Tuz Khurmatu including townships and villages such as Yengice, Bastamlı, Köküz, Muratlı, Karanaz, Biravçılı, Süleymanbeg, Hasadarlı and Çardaklı, as well as villages such as Bir Ahmet, Abbud and Zengili with mixed population of Turkmen and Arabs and subjected the people to genocide, looting, theft and destruction, forcing them to flee their homes.

Furthermore, Tuz Khurmatu has become an arena of conflict between Erbil and Baghdad. The risk of confrontation was further magnified, since the dispute between Erbil and Baghdad included many areas, including the budget share. The presence of al-Hashd al-Shaabi in Tuz Khurmatu likely have forced the Iraqi central government to oppose the KRG's position. In fact, it is known that a team composed of al-Hashd al-Shaabi members in Baghdad was dispatched to Tuz Khurmatu, therefore increasing the number of actors in the dispute. In addition, the local conflict in Tuz Khurmatu expanded in scope for the local actors, due to the involvement of external forces. At this point, it is also known that the terrorist group PKK had positioned itself in Tuz Khurmatu before October 16 in order to support the Peshmarga and targeted Turkmen civilians.

Despite the end of al-Hashdi al-Shaabi and the Peshmarga conflict and ISIS' territorial domination in the province, problems arose in the normalization process. The basis of this is the limited return to the villages that were damaged around Tuz Khurmatu by ISIS. Following the withdrawal of the Peshmarga after October 16, al-Hashdi al-Shaabi and the federal police started to provide security in the province. It is known that approximately forty thousand Turkmen displaced from Tuz Khurmatu live in Kirkuk. Only 70 families could return to Yengice village, which had an estimated

population of 16 to 17 thousand before ISIS, due to the security gaps as well as the destruction in the village. Almost all of the residents of Hasadarlı village of the Süleymanbeg sub-district, which had an estimated population of 4 thousand before ISIS, have returned. Residents of Muratlı village are migrants in Kirkuk and 400 Turkmen families of Biravcılı village are living in Chardaklı. Furthermore, the residents of Abbut village of Amirli have not yet returned despite having the permission to do so.

## Diyala Governorate

Being one of the oldest Turkmen settlements, Diyala is one of the regions in which ISIS has been active. An intense confrontation has begun in Diyala particularly after ISIS started moving towards the tomb of Imam al Asqari, a Shiite sacred site in Samarra which is the symbol of the sectarian conflict in Iraq after 2006. In this period, ISIS extended its activity in the Turkmen settlements of Qara Tapa, Jalawla, Saadiye, Kördere, Mansuriye (Adanaköy), Mukdadiya, Khanaqin, Mendeli and Baquba. It has even managed to capture Saadiye, Mansuriye and Jalawla. The Turkmen of Saadiye fled to Khanaqin, Baquba, Kalar, Suleimaniyah and Kirkuk, while the Turkmen of Mansuriye fled to Qara Tapa. The fact that the Sunni Turkmen of Mansuriye have taken refuge in the Shiite Turkmen settlement of Qara Tapa shows that sectarian differences mean little for Turkmen. The Turkmen of Qara Tapa have prioritized their ethnic identity over their sectarian identity and welcomed their kin from Mansuriye.

ISIS launched heavy assaults against the predominantly Turkmen town of Qara Tapa located in the south of Tuz Khurmatu but failed, thanks to the resistance of the Qara Tapa Turkmen. Yet, while the Turkmen militia protected the town center, the Peshmarga covered the countryside, hence achieving the longstanding objective of the KRG. It is also known that the people of Qara Tapa who fled to Kirkuk and other cities during the ISIS assaults returned to their homes after the assaults were thwarted.

ISIS also launched numerous assaults against Khanaqin. It approached towards Khanaqin after capturing Jalawla, where the Peshmarga resistance halted its advance. Since Khanaqin was a contested area between the Iraqi central government and the KRG, the deployment of the Peshmarga for the defense of the city ensured the Peshmarga dominance. The Iraqi Army and al-Hashd al-Shaabi were barred from entering Khanaqin where sporadic fighting occurred between the Peshmarga and al-Hashd al-Shaabi.

On the pretext of protecting the region from ISIS assaults, the KRG launched an initiative that involved "digging trenches" around Diyala, thereby ensuring its total control and drawing a de- facto border. Trenches were also dug from the town of Khanaqin in the east, skirting southwest around Jalawla and reaching northwest toward Kirkuk, enveloping Qara Tapa and Tuz Khurmatu. The trenches enabled the KRG to extend its dominance beyond its borders (Erbil, Suleimaniyah and Duhok) towards the contested areas in Diyala (Khanaqin, Jalawla and Qara Tapa). In addition, al-Hashd al-Shaabi controlled Saadiye, Mansuriye, Mukdadiya, Kazaniye and Mendeli. Therefore, the Turkmen geography in Diyala was effectively split between the Peshmarga and al-Hashd al-Shaabi.

However, with the October 16 intervention, the Peshmerga had to withdraw from the regions it had captured from ISIS, and the Iraqi Army and al-Hashdi al-Shaabi have gained control. Returns to the Turkmen regions of Mansuriye, Sadiye and Jalawla have begun. However, many houses became uninhabitable due to the destruction caused by the war. For this reason, a serious humanitarian crisis emerged and even daily necessities were lacking.

## Nineveh (Mosul) Governorate

Tel Afar, the largest Turkmen town of Iraq, has shared the fate of Mosul. It was invaded by ISIS just after the fall of Mosul. The Turkmen people numbering approximately 230,000 in the town center and the surrounding neighborhoods of Iyaziye and Muhallebiye had to flee their homes. They initially moved to Sinjar and Dohok. After a short time, those Turkmen who fled to Sinjar had to move once again and headed to Duhok and Erbil when ISIS launched an assault against Sinjar. Turkmen of Tel Afar received harsh treatment by the KRG and were not allowed to enter Erbil. They had to wait for days in the checkpoints outside Erbil. Most of the Shiite Turkmen had to move to the southern provinces such as Najaf, Kerbela and Hille, while the Sunni Turkmen migrated to Kirkuk. Turkish agencies, AFAD (the Disaster and Emergency Management Authority), TİKA (the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency) and the Turkish Red Crescent set up a camp in Yahyava, near Kirkuk, for the people from Tel Afar.<sup>61</sup> Some of these Turkmen from Tel Afar were settled in the camps in Duhok. Additionally, there are also approximately 52,000 Turkmen who passed through Syria and arrived in Turkey.<sup>62</sup> Others who could not flee strove to carry on their lives under the oppression of ISIS. While no clear figures are present about the number of Turkmen that remained in Tel Afar, some figures suggested that the number was approximately 10,000-15,000. Iraqi forces liberated Tel Afar on August 20, 2017 after a three-part campaign with the support of al-Hashd al-Shaabi.

Besides, other Turkmen settlements in Mosul came under serious pressure after ISIS captured Mosul. Resident Turkmen of the villages of Reshidiye, Sellamiye, Karakoyun, Şerihan, Sadabavize, Fazliye, Hurzibat abandoned their homes. ISIS also invaded the villages of Tezharap, Razkiye of al-Hamdaniye district and Babnid of Tel Kaif district and majority resident Turkmen had to flee their homes.

After Mosul and Tel Afar were liberated from ISIS, displaced Turkmen have started to return to least-damaged areas. Only half of the residents of Sheikh Ibrahim village of Tel Afar, which had an approximate population of 3,500 prior to ISIS, were able to return. The biggest factor in low rate of returns is the lack of infrastructure, drinking water and healthcare center in the village. Approximately 90 percent of residents of Karakoyun whose population was 25 thousand before ISIS occupation have returned. Due to lack of infrastructure, only 60 percent of 5000 residents of Lower Sharihan village have returned, while almost all 3000 residents of Upper Sharihan village have returned. Since municipal services are provided in Reshidiye of the central district, the return rate of the population of approximately 40 thousand people has approached 95 percent. While nearly half of the residents of Tezharap, Karayatak, Sellamiye, and Şemsiye villages in Hamdaniye district were able to return, the vast majority of Sennif village residents could not yet return.

Meanwhile, the rate of return to Tel Afer, the largest Turkmen district of Iraq has remained at 40-45 percent. Permission to return was delayed because mine clearance efforts continued for a long time after liberation from ISIS. In addition, the infrastructure and security problems in the city pose the biggest obstacle to the return of Tel Afar residents. A 281 billion dinar fund (approximately 220 million dollars) is allocated for the reconstruction of Nineveh which is distributed according to the population of the districts. Accordingly, 20 of the 40 projects supported by this fund are reserved for Mosul, 10 for Tel Afar and the other 10 for other districts. Tel Afer receives water five days a week per

<sup>61</sup> Data compiled from interviews during the field work.

<sup>62</sup> Data compiled from interviews conducted in Ankara.

the instructions of the governor of Nineveh. Although approximately 32 thousand families migrated from Tel Afar as of 12 March 2017, 331 thousand 164 people were able to return as of April 2019. However, this number includes 151 sub-districts, villages and neighborhoods of Tel Afer district.

There is strong relationship among the Turkmen of Tel Afar who have migrated to the south of Iraq. It would not be wrong to say that this helps the Turkmen to protect their unity and national identity. There have been returns to Muhallebiye, as the town was not destroyed. The situation in the İyaziye Township is different due to destruction. Though approximately 800 out of 3000 houses in the township have not been demolished, many of them have also become inhabitable. However, 175 families have returned. Considering that before 2014, a thousand families were living in İyaziye, the return rate stands below 20 percent. Reconstruction of the township has also been problematic since the bridges between İyaziye and Tel Afer have not been rebuilt. The local al-Hashdi al-Shaabi provides the security. The Turkmen migrants from İyaziye have settled in Leylan, Yahyava, Erbil and Duhok in addition to Turkey.







**TURKMEN  
MIGRATION**

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## TURKMEN MIGRATION

Negligence and discrimination against Turkmen in the region started after the British occupation of Iraq in 1918 and the inclusion of Mosul-Kirkuk ceded in the British mandate administration Iraq with the 1926 Ankara Agreement, and a systematic identity assimilation policy was implemented towards Turkmen. After this date, the governments in Iraq started oppressing the Turkish community and perceived it as a threat. In fact, it is stated that the name "Turkmen" was used instead of the name "Turk" used in the early periods in order to break the ties with Turkey. In this period, the newly established Republic of Turkey gave priority to solving its internal problems and the development of the country, giving weight to domestic politics, and did not take much interest in foreign policy until the Second World War. At this point, the Turkmen, who could not find support, did not have a tradition of rebellion and came from a statist tradition, were dragged into minority psychology and turned into a closed society. The situation was further fueled by policies of the regimes in Iraq. Turkmen have never been allowed to engage in political activities and potential leaders among them leaders were occasionally killed. Therefore, they did not prefer to take up arms, which is a dominant approach in the region, rather they focused on protecting their cultural and ethnic identity due to their urbanized and intellectual population structure, as well as the state of complacency that emerged as a result of trust in Turkey. While Turkmen did not engage in any political activity, they founded cultural and social institutions. They failed to attain results due to the regime policies. On the other hand, other obstacles against an organized and unified Turkmen political activity are the scattered Turkmen settlements in various provinces and the presence of a serious brain drain out of Iraq as a result of the systematic assimilation policies carried out in Iraq. In addition, Turkmen remained in cross fire during conflicts since their settlements are situated in a natural buffer zone between Arabs and Kurds. One could argue that Turkmen suffered greatly from the operations carried out by the Saddam Hussein administration to suppress the uprisings of Kurdish groups in the north of Iraq. The most striking example in this regard is the Altinkopru Massacre<sup>63</sup> that took place in 1991.

After 1991, a no-fly zone was established in the north of Iraq and a de facto autonomous zone was created here, which was left to the administration of the KDP and PUK, and the Iraqi opposition gained a breathing space that the Turkmen also benefited from. After 1991, many Turkmen parties and non-governmental organizations were established in this process. However, the Turkmen, suffering from a lack of a deep political experience, fell under the influence of different factors in this process, and were used against each other and even clashed from time to time.

Despite all difficulties, it is possible to state that the Turkmen political movement in Iraq has made progress today and has started to get involved in Iraqi politics. Considering the elections held in Iraq, it can be said that its political skill has gradually increased. Turkmen politics has also made progress within itself, and the ITF has organized five congresses in the last twenty years. On the other hand, new Turkmen parties emerged and tried to get involved in Iraqi politics. However, especially considering the Turkmen experience in Iraqi politics after 2003, the most effective way for the preservation of the Turkmen identity and involvement in Iraqi politics with the "Turkmen" identity involves placing the Turkmen identity in the foreground, maintaining cooperation with other ethnic, political and religious groups and providing support for unification under the awareness of Iraqiness. Otherwise, religious, sectarian and political approaches that remain outside the Turkmen identity may lead to the gradual assimilation of the Turkmen national identity, which is one of the founding elements of Iraq, and eventually may lead to its termination.

<sup>63</sup> For detailed information, see. Ekrem Pamukçu, 'Irak Türklerine Uygulanan Katliamlar', Kerkük Dergisi, Special Issue No 25, June 1999, p.5.



### Turkey and the Turkmen

Since the founding of the Iraqi state, Turkmen have been immigrating to Turkey, which they see as their homeland, for a variety of reasons, both individually or in groups and have taken up residence in the country and acquired Turkish citizenship. In time, a sizeable Turkmen community was established in Turkey. Strong historical, ethnic, religious and cultural ties between Turkey and the Turkmen have sometimes benefited both, but also caused harm. Iraqi regimes have, on the one hand, accused Turkey of protecting, steering and using Turkmen for its own interests, and, on the other hand, accused the Turkmen in Iraq of being Turkey's policy instrument and having allegiance to Turkey. Despite these accusations, the bond between Turkey and Turkmen, though at times weakened, has never been broken.

Over the course of the approximately 90 year period since the founding of the Republic of Turkey and the Iraqi state, a large Turkmen community has been formed in Turkey, which has become an important factor shaping Turkey's policy towards Iraq. Especially, in the period after the US invasion of Iraq, the Turkmen have moved to the forefront of Turkey's Iraq policy. Determining the population of Iraqi Turkmen residing currently in Turkey, finding out about their level of consciousness and commitment to their national identity, examining the status and activities of their civil society organizations and finding out whether they have the capacity to affect Iraq's policies towards Turkmen, to influence decision-makers in Turkey and to inculcate Turkmen and Iraqi identity will lend itself to providing an example to the Turkmen living in Iraq and elsewhere. In addition, it would provide an important insight for the formulation of Turkey's Iraq policy.



**TURKMEN  
CIVIL SOCIETY  
ORGANIZATIONS IN  
TURKEY**

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## TURKMEN CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS IN TURKEY<sup>64</sup>

Turkmen migration towards Turkey since the establishment of the Iraqi state have continued increasingly and consequently a resident Turkmen population in Turkey has developed. Many Turkmen associations have been founded to address the problems of the population and improve communication within the Turkmen community in Turkey. The number of Turkmen associations have been increasing especially after 1990 due to acceleration of Turkmen migration to Turkey. The Iraqi Turks Culture and Solidarity Association (ITKYD), which was established in 1959, was the only organization representing Turkmen in Turkey until 1990. The founding goal of the ITKYD was to carry out cultural and social activities, however it is possible to say all Turkmen activities for politics to culture were carried out under the umbrella of this organizations until 1991. These activities continued with the establishment of many organizations later. The administrators of these new organizations are people who previously worked in ITKYD.

Another feature of these organizations is that majority of their leaders are Kirkuki which shows why Iraqi Turkmens are often referred to as "Kerkuk Turks." However, since the developments in Turkmen settlements besides Kirkuk such as Tel Afer and Tuz Khurmatu attracted attention and migration from these regions to Turkey have increased since 2003, Turkmen associations have become more diversified. The leaders of Turkmen associations are overall highly educated, but doctors, architects and engineers are the majority.

### Iraqi Turks Culture and Solidarity Association (ITCSA)



The Iraqi Turks Culture and Solidarity Association (ITCSA) is the oldest civil society organization founded by Turkmens living in Turkey in 1959. Almost all of the leaders of other Turkmen associations are either members of ITCSA or have had membership for a period of time. ITCSA held 33 general assemblies and had 24 chairmen so far. The current association chairman is Kemal Beyatlı. Its headquarters is in Istanbul, and it has branches in Ankara, Izmir, Bursa and Konya.

The association provides assistance to Turkmen families as well as helps Turkmens in Turkey to solve their bureaucratic problems. The association holds seminars, meetings, conferences, as well as training programs and publishes a magazine called "Türkmen Bohçası" (Turkmen Bundle) for Turkmen women in Turkey since 2002. In addition, the association supported the journal "Kirkuk" which was published between 1990 and 2007 and has published 15 books introducing Turkmen culture, history and language. The association runs a website at [www.irakturkleri.org](http://www.irakturkleri.org). In addition, doctor members of the association provide healthcare to Turkmen patients and through consultation with hospitals in Turkey, Turkmen patients from Iraq are also provided treatment. The association does not carry out activities directly involving the Turkmen region in Iraq and focuses more on the problems of the community in Turkey. In this regard, the association prepares "Türk Soyululuk Belgesi" (The Turkish Lineage Document), which eases the process of receiving residency and work permits for those Turkmens who refer to the association.

<sup>64</sup> There is no detailed information available on the following Turkmen CSOs operating in Turkey: Yurdum Turkmeneli Association, Iraqi Turkmen Press Council Association, Turkmeneli Health and Social Solidarity Association, the Turkmen Union and Solidarity Association and Association of Turkmeneli Intellectuals.

## Türkmeneli Foundation for Cooperation and Culture (TFCC)



The Turkmeneli Cooperation and Culture Foundation was established on May 18, 1996 in Ankara. The foundation has two offices in Erbil and Kirkuk and runs a Cultural Center in Ankara, equipped with computers, internet access and a library for the use of students in Turkey. TCCF is one of the six organizations that founded the Iraqi Turkmen Front. The foundation chairman is Turhan Ketene, who is from Kirkuk and has served as chairman of the ITF for one term. The foundation stands out as the most active organizations among Turkmen organizations since 1996 which has been active in many fields such as human rights, humanitarian aid, culture, arts and education. TCCF made an 8 episode documentary called "Ağlama Sevdam" (Don't cry my love) on behalf of the Turkmens, and also organized many art exhibitions and Turkmen theater performances. In addition, the foundation provides extensive aid to Turkmen regions in Iraq. From 1996 to 2006, the foundation funded a total of 16 well projects in various villages and districts of Iraq, repair of 14 schools and health centers in various parts of Iraq, especially Mosul, Kirkuk and Talafer, construction of 400 houses and Healing Dispensary in Kirkuk. Also, the foundation enabled the provision of food, clothing, health materials, blankets and teaching equipment to the needy Turkmen living in Iraq through cooperation with international aid organizations, such as Maltaser of Germany, Action Meteor, ADRA Humanitarian from Germany, as well as The Turkey Diyanet Foundation, The International Blue Crescent Relief and Development Foundation, TThe Turkish Co-operation and Development Agency, Bilkent University, Yükseliş College, The Humanitarian Relief Foundation (IHH) and various other institutions and associations.

In addition, the foundation provided training in various fields for Turkmens. After the explosion in Amirli in 2007, the foundation built a fully equipped tent city with 30 tents for the Turkmens, a printing house with an area of 600 square meters on a 3.200 square meter plot in Tazehurmatu, Kirkuk, set up a television transmitter station in Kızlarbat on a 290 square meter plot with a 36 meter tower, drilled a water well in Mendeli. In 2009, the foundation purchased a full-fledged printing press and equipment for the printing house built in Tazehurmatu, Kirkuk, and completed the installation and assembly of the equipment and the printing house which started to operate. The foundation also opened many internet cafes in various regions of Iraq, set up tailor workshops, providing both training and employment to Turkmens. Lastly, the foundation carries out projects in cooperation with the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB) for the education of Turkmen and as well as projects on behalf of ITF.

## Antalya The Iraqi Turkmen Union and Solidarity Association



The dentist, Kürşat Çavuşoğlu, is the chairman of the association founded in Antalya in 2001. The entire board of directors of the association, consisting of 5 people, is from Kirkuk. It is known that 90 percent of the Turkmens in Antalya, where approximately 30 Turkmen families live, have acquired Turkish citizenship. Others also have residence and work permits, and most own established businesses. Turkmens work as doctors, engineers, and teachers as well as in the fields of tourism and trade. There are also Turkmens working in state institutions. However, approximately 80 percent of Turkmens are engaged in tourism. The number of Turkmen who have recently come to Antalya is quite low. The association usually carries out joint activities with Akdeniz University, The Turkish Hearths and other associations of Turks Abroad in Antalya, and participates in the activities of other Turkmen organizations in Turkey. Chairman Çavuşoğlu expresses that having a small Turkmen community in Antalya has an advantage and all Turkmen in the city know each other and

have strong relations. Çavuşoğlu states that they communicate by organizing cultural and social activities, commemoration of Turkmen martyrs and celebration of national holidays, picnics and trips. Despite communicating with the Turkmen region in Iraq, it is possible to say that the activities in the field are not carried out effectively and that the association can only provide social unity among the Turkmens in Antalya.

### Kirkuk Foundation



İzzettin Kerkük is the founding chairman of the foundation, which was established in Istanbul in 1998. Erşat Hürmüzlü is the current chairman. The main purpose of the foundation is to bring together the archive of Turkmens owned by the founding members. Almost all the work of the Kirkuk Foundation is conducted by Suphi Saatçi who is the secretary general of the foundation and a professor at the Mimar Sinan University Faculty of Arts. The founding committee consisted of Suphi Saatçi and Erşat Hürmüzlü, both from Kirkuk. The founding committee is also the foundation's board of directors. Professor Mahir Nakip, who is also from Kirkuk is a member of the board of auditors. The aim of the association is to publish influential works. The foundation has published forty books so far and eight more are being prepared for publication. It has also published a magazine called "Kardaşlık" (Brotherhood) which has been published quarterly in Turkish, Arabic and English for 11 years. These magazines and publications published can be sold in publishing houses and bookstores thanks to the commercial business owned by the foundation. The funding for the foundation comes from these revenues of these publications. The Kirkuk Foundation can be considered to be successful, judged on its founding goals. Its publications have been particularly effective in generating publicity for Turkmens. The website for the foundation is "www.kerkukvakfi.com".

### Turkmeneli Human Rights Association



Turkmeneli Human Rights Association was founded by Dr. Nefi Demirci, who is a founding member of ITCSA in Istanbul in 2002. Although Demirci has handed over the chairmanship for one term, he has since reassumed the position of chairman. All members of the board of directors are from Kirkuk. Chairman Demirci explained that they established. The Turkmeneli Human Rights Association since ITCSA can conduct cultural activities according to the Law of Associations and is not a political organization. Demirci stated that the association cooperates with all institutions related to the Turkic World and has close relations especially with Aydınlar Ocağı and The Turkish World Research Foundation, but no organic connections. The association's activities are limited to organization of meetings and conferences. However, it is possible to say that it is not very active due to financial difficulties.

### Iraqi Turkmen Brotherhood and Culture Association (ITBCA)



Salman Nalbantoğlu is the third and current chairman of ITBCA, founded in 2002. All five members of the board of directors are from Kirkuk with high level of education who have moved to Turkey in 1991. Nalbantoğlu states that the association aims to strengthen the bonds of brotherhood and increase unity and solidarity. The association's activities focus generally on the education of Turkmens. It is active in the Turkmen region in Iraq. A branch of the association opened in 2003 in Kirkuk. ITBCA completed the construction of a high school building for 150 students, and opened its doors with 10 teachers, activated the sports club in Musalla, one of the important Turkmen districts of Kirkuk, to support

Turkmen athletes, built a playground in Kirkuk in cooperation with Istanbul Bayrampaşa Municipality, and started Radio Sumer broadcasting in Iraq with programming in Turkish. In addition, the association started the "Sister Family Project" through which fifty families from Turkey sponsored the needs of 50 Turkmen families in Iraq. The association gets together with other Turkmen associations periodically, especially with the ITCSA.

### Iraqi Turks Justice Cooperation and Solidarity Association (ITJCSA)



Mithat İbrahim is the chairman of ITJSSA, which was established in Istanbul in 2007. İbrahim states the objectives of the association as strengthening the Turkmen in public life. According to him, the main problem of the Turkmen is being under the influence of other groups because they are not valued, so they aim to reach out to every Turkmen. The association's activities focus on healthcare provision. The association provides monthly medication to patients of families registered with the association and works on joint projects with The Humanitarian Relief Foundation (İHH). ITJSSA sponsored the treatment of Turkmen patients through a joint project with Bezm-i Alem University Hospital in Istanbul. The association also initiated the mobile hospital project providing healthcare to patients in Turkmen regions such as Kirkuk, Talafer, Yengice and Tazehurmatu. Chairman İbrahim explains that the purpose of the aid is to direct the Turkmen nation to their own organizations. The association not only aids the Turkmen living in Istanbul, but also those Turkmen families living in other cities as well. The association web address is "www.ityad.org".

### İhsan Doğramacı Erbil Foundation

İhsan Doğramacı Erbil Foundation was founded in Ankara, Turkey in 2008, but focuses its work in Iraq and aims to "to support and contribute to educational, cultural and healthcare activities." For this purpose, the foundation set up a health clinic for students called the "Erbil Clinic" and sponsors the treatment of Turkmen from Erbil at Bayındır Hospital in Turkey at 30 to 70 percent discount, provide lodging and discounted air transportation at 20 percent discount by Atlas Jet to the patients. In addition, to revive the lost Turkmen identity in Erbil, the foundation founded the "İhsan Doğramacı Cultural Center" in the city. The foundation sponsors the education of students from Iraq in Turkey as well as provides support to Turkmen schools in Iraq. Overall, it can be said that the foundation's work is not limited to Erbil, but also includes other Turkmen regions.

### Federation of Turkmeneli Associations (FTA)



The Federation of Turkmeneli Associations (FTA) was founded by representatives of the Turkmen associations, foundations and other organizations in Turkey in December 2010, in order to gather all under one roof. Ümit Akkoyunlu, Cüneyt Mengü and Kürşat Çavuşoğlu took part in the temporary executive committee serving for the establishment of the federation. The federation's goals are "to stimulate the realization of Iraqi Turkmen's objectives, to support work on Turkmen history, culture, art, folklore and literature, to generate publicity, and influence public opinion in Turkey, Iraq and the world in favor of Turkmen." Aydın Beyatlı is the chairman of the federation with headquarters in Istanbul. At its founding, the following organizations were involved:

- Iraqi Turks Culture and Solidarity Association,
- İzzettin Kirkuk Culture and Research Foundation (Kirkuk Foundation),
- Association of Iraqi Turkmen Press Council

- Turkmeneli Human Rights Association,
- Middle East Businessmen and Industrialists Association,
- Iraqi Turkmen Brotherhood and Cultural Association,
- Iraqi Turks Justice, Solidarity and Solidarity Association,
- Turkmeneli Health and Social Solidarity Association,
- Turkmen Union and Solidarity Association,
- Turkmeneli Intellectuals Association,
- Turkmeneli Advisory Council

### **Iraqi Turkmen Altun Kupri Friendship Association (ITAFa)**



Iraqi Turkmen Altun Kupri Friendship Association (ITAFa) was founded in 2013 in Istanbul. Bozkurt Köprülü is the chairman. ITAFa's goals are to strengthen the solidarity among the Turkmens of the Altun Kupri sub-district of Kirkuk, to create unity among Kirkukis, to address the problems of the Turkmens in Iraq, to be a bridge between Turkey and the Turkmens by providing the communication with the region." The association is involved in charity and in collaboration with other Turkmen civil society organizations and carries out relief activities in the region.

### **Turkmeneli International Humanitarian Aid Education and Culture Association**



Turkmeneli Humanitarian Aid Education and Culture Association was established in 2019 in Ankara. Hüseyin Remzi is the chairman. The association addresses the problems of Turkmen families who migrated to Turkey from territories occupied by ISIS in Iraq after 2014. In addition to the in-kind and monetary aid it provides, the association assists in solving the administrative and bureaucratic problems of Turkmen immigrants, organizes education programs for Turkmen youth, women and children, and sponsors healthcare.

### **Turkmen Media Organizations in Turkey**

Though a Turkmen diaspora has been living in Turkey for many years, Turkmen media has not been developed. Apart from the Kirkuk News Agency, founded in 2009 as the representative of the Turkmeneli Television's and Turkmen Press Council, there are no other Turkmen media. However, a large archive of print media exists on the Turkmen in Turkey including many books, and journals. Many books have been published by Turkmens living in Turkey, however only by a few specific authors and generally these are works on Turkmen literature, poetry and folklore. These publications do not receive a high level of attention in Turkey, let alone internationally since they are written in Turkish. There are almost no publications in Arabic or English on the Turkmens. This prevents the Turkmens from having a voice in the international arena. Recently, there has been an increase in foreign language publications about Turkmens. Still, Turkmen media is extremely inadequate in lobbying activities. Not only are few writers among the Turkmens, but also the number of people trained in the field of media is very low. This is the biggest obstacle in the professionalization and development of the Turkmen media.



**CONCLUSION**

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## CONCLUSION

As stated previously, the Turkish presence in Iraq dates back to 674 AD. Turkmens are one of the founding elements of the Iraqi state. The Turkmens were the rulers of Iraq during the Ottoman period, but following the British invasion in 1918, were expelled from their government positions and exiled. Turkmens, who have been under the rule of repressive regimes for years, have been kept away from politics and focused on cultural activities to preserve their identity. At the same time, since the Turkmens resided in a scattered manner in Iraq, acted as a buffer between Arabs and Kurds, and the regions inhabited by the Turkmens were not well secured, they could not develop a national unity within Iraq, but cultivated separate regional identities. The Turkmens had difficulties in pursuing a holistic approach and could not succeed in establishing a comprehensive organization throughout the country, even though there were smaller scale mobilization efforts in some regions. Thus, the weak Turkmen movement could not continue its resistance in the face of pressure. Furthermore, the fact that the Turkmens are a nation of state-builders and lack a tradition of rebellion against the state, rendered them ineffective and led them to become an introverted community in order to protect their existence.

There weren't any Turkmen organizations until The Turkmen Brotherhood Club was founded in 1960 following the Kirkuk Massacre in 1959. The Turkmen Brotherhood Club remained in the hands of the Turkmens for only 16 years, after which the Ba'ath Party took over this organization and brought party member Turkmens to the leadership. Although Turkmen movements led by Turkmens outside Iraq appeared from time to time, they were repressed by the regime and the Turkmens who took part in these movements were heavily punished. While many Turkmens were exiled, many were arrested or executed. The Turkmen movement was revived in the 1970s, but many of its leaders were hanged in 1980 causing a new trauma for the Turkmens. As a result, Turkmens refrained from mobilizing until the safe zone north of the 36th parallel in Iraq was established after the Gulf War in 1991. The Turkmens started to organize again in a scattered manner. Although with the founding of The Iraqi Turkmen Front (ITF) in 1995 tried to remedy the situation, it would not be wrong to say that this effort caused polarization among the Turkmens. However, this polarization was limited to the politicians and did not divide the entire Turkmen population. In fact, the Turkmen people, who are not accustomed to politics, and observing the divisions and polarization among the different organizations stayed further away from them.

Although a new glimmer of hope appeared after the collapse of the Saddam regime in 2003, the Turkmens were not given a political role in the restructured Iraq by the USA. The Turkmens could not find a favorable position for themselves in the new balance of power within Iraq based on ethnic and sectarian divisions and turned to alliances with the new dominant groups. This situation sometimes completely distanced the people from politics, sometimes it diminished power and prevented the real Turkmens' potential from emerging.

In this sense, the Turkmen people are not able to play a role in Iraq in proportion to their size, not only in the political sphere, but also in the economic, cultural and social spheres. The number of students attending schools providing education in Turkish has been decreasing. Turkmens, who controlled the economy and the market in places such as Kirkuk, and especially in Erbil, are slowly losing their economic power. Although Turkmens try to be a part of every political process in Iraq, the political actors in Iraq try to exclude them from the process. In fact, the Turkmens were not represented in the governments established in Iraq in 2014 and 2018, and were not allocated a ministerial position.

On the other hand, although Turkmen have founded many civil society organizations, it is difficult to say that these have become professional and receive enough support from the Iraqi government and the Turkmen people. Likewise, the cultural life of Turkmen could not develop to the extent of its potential. Although there are two Turkmen TV stations broadcasting nationally, there are currently no Turkmen daily newspapers in Turkish or Arabic. There are scarcely any media organs that can make the Turkmen voices heard in the world.

The biggest problem of the Turkmen is not being in the ruling positions. In most regions densely populated by Turkmen, the government is in the hands of other groups. Important events such as the census and the county council elections will take place in the upcoming period and a Kirkuk problem will emerge. At this point, in order for the Turkmen people to preserve their existence, they should reveal their potential by bringing their national identity to the fore. Otherwise, as in the previous regime periods, the Turkmen identity will gradually lose its strength, melt in the pot of other nations, and become a "minority" to which quotas are given instead of being a founding element.

In addition, the presence and influence of Turkey for the Turkmen in Iraq is vital. Turkey is still seen as the Turkmen "motherland." The Turkmen's most important expectation from Turkey seems to be their protection, which includes political, economic, cultural and even military protection.

Moreover, some Turkmen leaders have made demands for the creation of a safe zone in Iraq for the Turkmen. The opinion of the ITF Chairman Erşat Salihi to apply directly to the UN on this issue is supported strongly among the Turkmen. Considering the advantages of the "no-fly zone" created in the north of Iraq in 1991 for the Kurds, it is often stated that it would be appropriate to implement a similar policy for the Turkmen.

For this reason, Turkmen expect that Turkey lobbies on the international platform regarding the safe zone that is desired to be created for the Turkmen, and Turkey's support for the Turkmen in the zone to be established.

In addition, it is observed that Turkmen, who had to flee their homes due to the threat of ISIS, want to return to their places of residence after they were liberated. The ISIS occupation has caused the dispersal of the Turkmen population and the destruction of Turkmen settlements. This situation causes the erosion of the Turkmen identity who were displaced due to the dominant identities in the regions they settled.

In the short term, it can be ensured that Turkmen are covered more in the Turkish media. In addition, Turkmen intellectuals living in Turkey can meet with decision makers at various levels of the government. These meetings will at least be an element of relief for the Turkmen, as they will be able to speak up about their problems. Ensuring the continuity of assistance and aids to the Turkmen may be beneficial in terms of increasing the perception that the Turkmen are not alone. After the end of the ISIS threat and the establishment of stability in the regions where Turkmen live, the return of Turkmen to their regions should be followed carefully. Developing facilitating mechanisms for Turkmen to return to their regions after the restoration of stability can be beneficial in terms of preserving the Turkmen identity in Iraq. In addition, preparing for possible returns and the reconstruction of Turkmen settlements may be beneficial in determining the systematic approach regarding the aid to be delivered to the Turkmen. Turkey can put pressure on the improvement of the living conditions of the Turkmen who migrated in Iraq through the groups with which it has

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good relations in Iraq, especially the KRG. In particular, it can be ensured that the KRG provides the same aid for the Turkmens as it did for the Yezidis and Christians. In the same way, cooperation mechanisms can be developed for the Turkmens who migrated to the south of Iraq by negotiating with the Iraqi central government. Turkey can at least create an agenda on the political, social, legal and military protection of the Turkmens in international platforms such as the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference, thereby creating an awareness and enabling international mechanisms to take action for Turkmens. All of these will be an indication that Turkey embraces its historical and national responsibility. For Turkmens, the "homeland" is Turkey.



