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Understanding the Process of the Anfal Campaign

**Chalank Yahya
University College Maastricht
The Netherlands**

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1. Introduction

The well-known social scientist, Herbert Kelman has explored a form of mass violence. He called mass violence such as genocide as 'Sanctioned Massacres'. According to Kelman, Sanctioned Massacres are such crimes that occur in the context of a genocidal policy that 'indiscriminate, ruthless, and often systematic mass violence, carried out by military or paramilitary personnel while engaged in officially sanctioned campaigns, the victims of which are defenseless and unresisting civilians, including old men, women, and children' (Kelman & Hamilton, 1989; 12). This definition of Kelman is very recognizable when it comes to the crimes and massacres, through which the Kurdish people had to suffer from in North-Iraq in the late 1980s. For instance, during the Iran-Iraq war, including chemical attacks against the Kurds, the Anfal campaign and the continuous suppression of the former central government, in all these atrocities, the Kurdish people, indiscriminate of age or gender, were targeted to be killed and destroyed by the former regime. Consequently, these atrocities have had an enormous impact on the life condition of the Kurdish people in North-Iraq.

With regard to these atrocities that have been committed against the Kurds in North-Iraq, this paper will, however, only focus on the Anfal campaign, which has taken place against the Kurds in 1987-1989 (Middle East Watch, 1993). For the sake of clarity, this paper will take an attempt to study the methods and mechanisms that have been used during the Anfal campaign. Despite of the importance of labeling the Anfal campaign as genocide, nevertheless, it is also very crucial to study and analyze the methods and mechanisms that have been used during the Anfal. This, in order to demonstrate that what has been happened against the Kurds, it was due to a well studied genocidal plan from a very structured and organized government, which has intended to destroy the Kurdish civilians.

In this regard, this paper attempts to answer two questions. First of all, it is necessary to ask about what methods are used during the Anfal campaign. The aim of raising this question is in order to display the well structured and organized plan by the former government, through which more than 100 000 Kurds were killed (Middle East Watch, 1993). The automatic second question is then; which mechanisms are used in order to realize the methods that have been set up during the Anfal process. The second question will be dealing with the conditions under which the perpetrators went through in order to implement the process of Anfal against the Kurds. Moreover, it should be mentioned that this paper will use two different criminological theories in order to answer these two questions.

2. Hilberg's paradigm and the Anfal campaign

In his book 'The Destruction of the European Jews', Raul Hilberg¹ (1985) has set up a paradigm which explains the methods that have been used by Nazi regime during the Holocaust. With this paradigm, Hilberg explains that the only way in a modern society, in which a defenseless group of people can effectively be destroyed, this can be done through three steps. The first step is the Definition; it is needed to define the target group that will become the victims. In the case of the Holocaust, the Jews were the target group that was defined by the Nazi regime. The second step is the Concentration or seizure, in which the defined group of people will be replaced to some special camps and they will be separated from the rest of the population. This step has indeed taken place; the Jews were replaced and were gathered in several camps. The third and last step in Hilberg's paradigm is the Annihilation. During this step, different instruments will be used in order to destroy the largest amount of the defined group of people within a very short period of time (Hilberg, 1985). By different instruments during the last step, it can

¹ Raul Hilberg is a political scientist and historian, who has analyzed the history of the Holocaust. He is one of the world's preeminent Holocaust scholars.

be thought of mass murder, torture, executions, starvation, etc. Also, these instruments have been used during the Holocaust against the Jews.

Definition

|

Concentration (or seizure)

|

Annihilation

It should be mentioned that through this paradigm, the process of the Holocaust has been studied and labeled as genocide. With regard to the Anfal campaign, it seems to be very relevant to use Hilberg's paradigm in order to study the methods that have been used during the Anfal campaign, since these methods seem to be very similar to the methods that have been used during the Holocaust. In below, the Hilberg's paradigm will be applied to the case of Anfal.

2.1 Definition

During the Anfal campaign, the Hilberg's first step of Definition has taken place in June 1987, when Ali Hassan al-Majid (secretary general of the Ba'ath Party's Northern Bureau) has defined certain Kurdish areas as 'prohibited' areas. The existence of the Kurdish guerilla's activities (Peshmerga) in these areas was a crucial reason for the Ba'athy administration to label these entire areas as 'prohibited' areas (Middle East Watch, 1993). Moreover, this step of defining the target group for destruction became clearer in October 1987. From then, the former Iraqi regime had created a buffer strip between the government and the Peshmerga-controlled areas (Middle East Watch, 1993). With assistance of the Iraqi troops and Jash (pro-government Kurdish militants) these prohibited areas were further defined and the government was controlling the mentioned buffer zones (Middle East Watch, 1993). On this way, the definition process and the target group became clear for the Anfal campaign. The provided map in the end of

this section will demonstrate the location of the prohibited areas and the places where the Anfal campaign had taken place.

2.2 Concentration

After defining the target group for the Anfal campaign, the next step of the Ba'athy regime was to destroy the target group. For this, the army trucks started to transport the villagers (of the prohibited areas) to nearby holding centers and transit camps (special camps have created for this phase). This process has taken place at the time, while the Jash militants were controlling the villages and shooting those civilians who attempted to escape the transport phase (Middle East Watch, 1993). The role of different government's agencies in this phase explains the bureaucratic policy of the Ba'athy regime, through which orders were given from top to below and different measures were taken in order to accomplish these orders.

It should be mentioned that this process of replacing the target group to the special centers and camps fits in the second step of Hilberg's paradigm, which is the Concentration step (Hilberg, 1985). As it is mentioned earlier, in order to destroy a big amount of people within a short period of time, therefore, it is needed first to define the target group then replace them to the special places, where the destruction process can be conducted. These two steps were also taken very carefully by the Ba'athy regime in order to accomplish the Anfal campaign against the Kurds. During the replacement phase of Anfal between February-September 1988, most of the detainees were transferred to Topzawa, a popular Army camp nearby Kirkuk. Other detainees were transferred to Tikrit. Women and children were trucked on from Topzawa to a separate camp in Dibs and between 6000-8000 elderly detainees were taken to an abandoned prison called Nugra Salman in the southern desert in Iraq, where hundreds of them died as a result of neglect, starvation and disease (Middle East Watch, 1993). Thus, it can be said that this phase of transferring of the target group has been conducted with

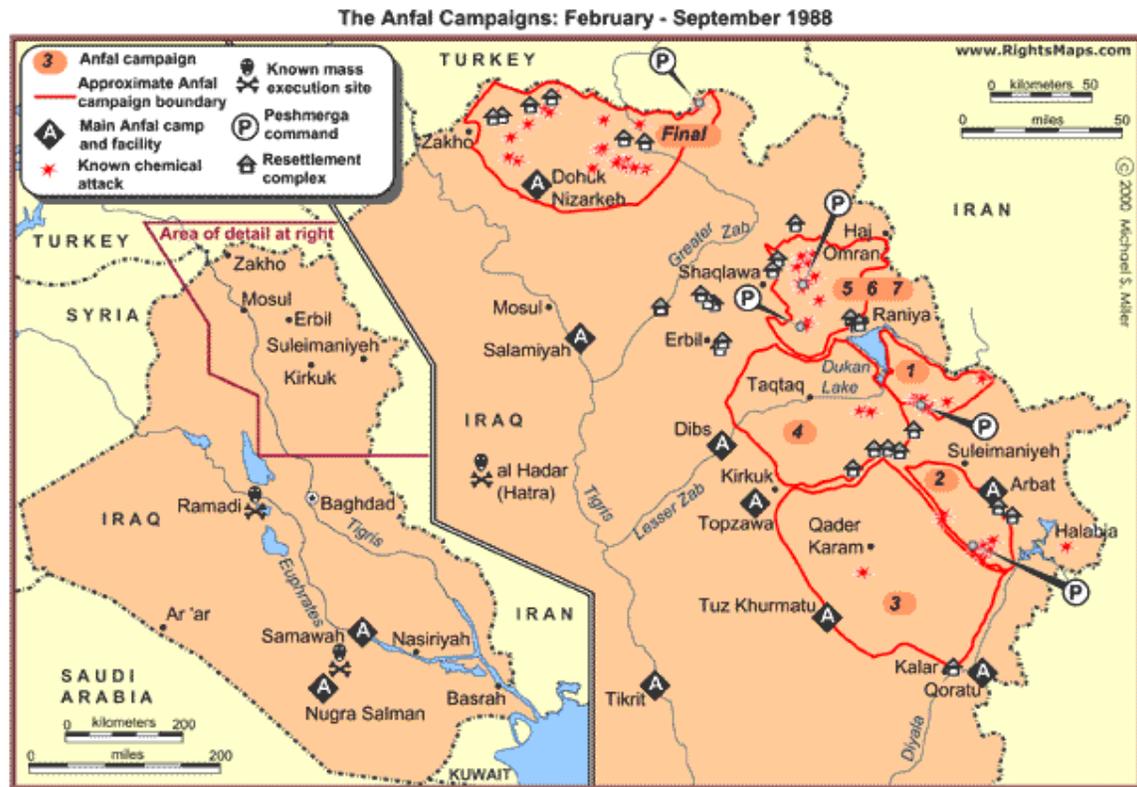
care by the Ba'athy regime. The defined target group was divided in different subgroups (old people, men and women and children), which each of these subgroups has been treated according to the orders that came from the higher authority of the Ba'athy party.

2.3 Annihilation

The third step of Hilberg's paradigm, the Annihilation; it is thus the last step of destruction, where the target group will be destroyed. Even, this step can also be found in Anfal process. During this phase, the Ba'athy regime has used different instruments in order to destroy the Kurdish people who were in the prohibited areas. After transferring most of the civilians of these mentioned areas to the special Army camps, the military officers carried out different instructions from their commanders in order to destroy the Kurdish detainees. In general and in all Anfal phases (in total seven Anfal phases between February-September 1988, see the map below) the Kurdish men of the prohibited areas were directly killed (Middle East Watch, 1993). The elderly people, women and children were killed either due to neglect, starvation and diseases or due to the mass graves and mass killings (Middle East Watch, 1993). Moreover, most of the prohibited areas, which were more than 4000 villages were destroyed completely and these locations were attacked by chemical weapons, this with an aim to destroy the escaped civilians. Due to these instruments thus, the Ba'athy regime has taken several measures in order to accomplish the process of destruction of the Kurds during the Anfal.

From this below provided map, the different phases of the Anfal campaign become clearer. As it is demonstrated, the Anfal campaign has started in different places in North-Iraq from February to September 1988. In each of these places, the Ba'athy regime has conducted the parallel steps in order to destroy the civilians of the defined prohibited areas (Salih, 1995). It is interesting to mention that the first two steps of Hilberg's paradigm can be recognized from this map. The first 'Definition' step is the places within the red lines of the map. The civilians of

these places were defined as target group of the Anfal in order to be destroyed. Moreover, as it is demonstrated from the map, the letter 'A' means the military camps, which the target group of the Anfal has brought to these special camps and was destroyed. These camps imply the 'Concentration' or seizure step of Hilberg's paradigm.



Map of North-Iraq/Iraq where the Anfal campaign has taken place²

Moreover, it should be mentioned that these different steps of Anfal have taken place with great care by the Ba'athy regime. Different government's agencies such as; military troops, Jash, Iraq's General Security Directorate (Amn) and Military Intelligence (Istikhbarat) were included in these steps (Middle East Watch, 1993). This means that the Anfal campaign was organized and conducted due to a bureaucratic and well structured policy of the former central government. This bureaucratic aspect is also very crucial in Hilberg's paradigm. According to Hilberg, a destruction process cannot be accomplished without two important

² This map is provided by the Human Rights Watch in 1993

bureaucratic steps, which are the administrative machines and hierarchies with their own tradition (Hilberg, 2003). What he means by these two aspects is that a genocidal policy needs strict administrative machines in order to define the target group. Furthermore, the strict bureaucratic policy and hierarchies are needed in order to implement the destruction process without any delays. In the process of Anfal, these two bureaucratic aspects of Hilberg's paradigm were very well recognized, where different governmental agencies were implementing the provided tasks of the regime. From this, one may conclude that the Anfal campaign fits into the Hilberg's paradigm in both the different steps and the bureaucratic aspects. On this way thus, the methods of the Anfal campaign can be understood by using the Hilberg's paradigm, which is very similar to the Holocaust process.

3. Kelman's theory and the Anfal campaign

In his article 'Violence without Moral Restraint' Herbert Kelman³ defines his concept of 'Sanctioned Massacres'⁴ and explains very well the conditions under which the usual moral inhibitions against violence become weakened (Kelman, 1973). In other words, Kelman explains the psychological conditions, which the perpetrators are influenced through in order to commit gross human rights violations. For these psychological conditions, Kelman outlines three interrelated processes that are needed in order to restrain the moral obligations by the perpetrators during a genocidal policy. Authorization is the first process, in which a situation is created where standard moral obligations do not apply and the individuals are absolved of responsibility to make personal moral choices. The second process is Routinization, which so organize the action that there is no opportunity for raising moral questions and making moral decisions. The last

³ Herbert Kelman is Professor in Social Ethics. His works are dominated with theories in the field of Social Psychology, through which Kelman explains the several issues, e.g. crimes, genocide from the sociopsychological point of view.

⁴ See the Introduction section for the concept 'Sanctioned Massacres'.

process is Dehumanization of the victims; in this process victims are not longer seen as people, however, they are seen as terms of category to which they belong (Kelman, 1973).

It might be interesting to mention that these processes are used by Kelman in order to explain the conditions that have been taken place by the Nazi regime during the Holocaust and My Lai massacre that has committed by the U.S. troops in 1968 (Edward Day & Vandiver, 2000). Furthermore, Kelman's theory will be more discussed in depth, when his theory will be applied to the Anfal campaign. This is with an aim to explore the conditions that have been used by the Anfal perpetrators in order to commit genocidal crimes against the Kurds in 1988. In other words, Kelman's theory will be used in this paper in order to demonstrate the mechanisms that have been used during the Anfal campaign.

3.1 Authorization

According to Kelman, the genocidal policies occur in the context of an authority situation. The instructions and orders are given from the highest authority organizations and through a process of bureaucracy these orders will be accomplished. The perpetrators of gross human rights violations view these orders as obligations that they have to commit the cruelest crimes (Kelman, 1973). Another important aspect in this process is that the perpetrators do not view their crimes as personal committed crimes. They appeal to higher authority. On this way, many often attempts are taken by the perpetrators to justify or legitimize their actions by appealing to higher authorities (Edward Day & Vandiver, 2000).

During the Anfal campaign this process of Authorization is recognizable in a way that in each steps of the Anfal campaign orders and instructions were given from the government (authority situation) and due to the very strict steps these orders were accomplished (Middle East Watch, 1993). First of all, from the highest formal authority in Iraq, the Revolutionary Command Council, this was headed by President Saddam Hussein, from this highest authority thus Ali Hassan

al-Majid was authorized to become the Northern Bureau's Secretary General between 1987-1989 and to operate the Anfal campaign (Middle East Watch, 1993). From a meeting with the members of the Northern Bureau in May 26, 1987, al-Majid declares his plans to conduct the Anfal campaign 'This is my intention, and I want you to take serious note of it. As soon as we complete the deportations, we will start attacking them (he means by attacking probably also the Peshmerga forces) everywhere according to a systematic military plan' (Middle East Watch, 1993; 349). Secondly, each step during the Anfal campaign was conducted according to the commands that were given by the Northern Bureau of the Ba'athy regime, this in assistance with different ministries. For instance, from the Ministry of Defense, the Iraqi Army and Air Forces were included in the process of; burning and destroying the defined villages in the 'prohibited' areas, transporting the target group and also using chemical weapons to further destroy the Anfal locations (Middle East Watch, 1993). Furthermore, the General Military Intelligence (Istikhbarat) and the General Security Directorate (Amn) were leading the special units in order to report day by day reports of the Anfal process. Also, the lower militant bodies such as; Jaysh Al-Sha'abi, Emergency Forces and Jash, they were included in the process of Anfal in order to realize the orders that were given from the higher authority bodies and eliminate the amount of escapes of the target groups (Middle East Watch, 1993).

Thus, from these mentioned governmental agencies that were included in the process of Anfal, one may conclude that the aspect of Authorization was conducted with care during the Anfal campaign. The instructions were given from top to below, and the official officers were conducting these orders literary without appealing to their moral human obligation (e.g. to ask why does the target group have to be punished so cruelly?). This explains already the importance of the authority situation during a genocidal policy, where the orders are too strict and there is no room for moral obligation of the perpetrators (Kelman, 1989).

3.2 Routinization

During this process, the criminal actions are transformed into routine, mechanical and highly programmed operations (Kelman, 1973). The individual perpetrators become more in the position of willing to continue with the atrocities in order to justify their actions and to avoid the sanctions for disobedience (Kelman, 1989). For the psychological reasons this process of Routinization is needed to enforce the perpetrators to continue with gross human rights violations. Thus, routinization process fulfills two functions; first of all, it reduces the necessity of making decisions, which is important to guide the individual perpetrators in a genocidal policy. Secondly, routinization makes it easier to avoid the implications of the action, since the actor (the perpetrator) focuses on the details of his job rather than on its meaning (Kelman, 1973). Moreover, the process of routinization operates at two levels. The first level is the individual level, which performance of the job is broken down into a series of discrete steps most of them carried out in automatic and regularized fashion. The second level is the organizational level, in which the tasks of a genocidal plan are divided across different offices, each of which has responsibility for a small portion of it (Kelman, 1973). These two levels of routinization process explain already the importance of strict plans and bureaucracy in a genocidal policy.

With regard to the Anfal campaign, if the different phases and steps during the Anfal campaign were not transformed into routines, it wasn't possible for the Ba'ath regime to enforce the different governmental forces to carry out the orders of the higher authority. From the above mentioned steps and phases of Anfal, it can be argued that without routine and normalization of the official orders, it wasn't possible to finish the Anfal campaign.

3.3 Dehumanization

In a genocidal policy, next to very strict orders and routinization process, it is also very crucial to view the victims as subjects that are deserved to be killed. This

psychological instrument is very common phenomenon when it comes to the dehumanization of the enemy or the victim (Kelman, 1989). Kelman argues that, since the genocidal policies are the most extreme crimes against humanity, in such crimes it is thus necessary to identify the target group as a separate category, which does not belong to the population; therefore, it is also justifiable to destroy this target group (Kelman, 1989). Moreover, the dynamics of the genocide or massacre process itself further increase the perpetrator's tendency to dehumanize their victims (Kelman, 1973). During the Nazi camps and My Lai massacres this kind of dehumanization process has been used in order to continue with violence and dehumanize the victims (Edward Day & Vandiver, 2000).

This process of dehumanization was also present during the Anfal campaign. From the different documented tapes of Ali Hassan al-Majid with his officers, it becomes clear how he and other officers looked at the Kurds and dehumanized the civilians in the 'prohibited' areas in order to be killed and to be destroyed. For instance, in many different meetings, al-Majid called the Kurdish civilians of the 'prohibited areas as 'saboteurs' that are deserved to be punished and be killed (Middle East Watch, 1993 and Salih, 1995). Also, these people were not deserved to live properly, so it appears from one meeting with the members of the Northern Bureau in April 15, 1988, where al-Majid said; 'From now on I won't give the villagers flour, sugar, kerosene, water or electricity as long as they continue living there. Let them come closer to me to hear me, so that I can tell them the things I believe and want in ideology, education and common sense...' (Middle East Watch, 1993; 347). He also didn't show any respect for the Kurds or the target group (who were also Kurds from the 'prohibited' areas). From a meeting with unnamed officials in August 1, 1988, al-Majid said; '...every Kurd who lives there (in the prohibited areas thus), send them to the mountains to live like goats...' (Middle East Watch, 1993; 350). From these documented tapes, it becomes clear how the Ba'athy officials, including al-Majid have viewed the Kurds and have targeted the Kurds to be their victims, who were defined as 'saboteurs' and

deserved to be killed. This kind of Ba'athy policy can be labeled as Kelman's concept of *Dehumanization* of the victims.

Thus, from the above applied Kelman's concepts; Authorization, Routinization and Dehumanization, an attempt were taken to explain the mechanisms that have been used by the perpetrators in order to accomplish the Anfal campaign without considering the implications of their criminal acts. Moreover, from the above explanation, it becomes clear that the three concepts of Kelman's theory were present during the Anfal campaign, which implies the genocidal policy of the Ba'athy regime in order to destroy the defined locations and civilians of the Anfal campaign.

4. Conclusion

The criminological theories of Hilberg and Kelman have been developed in another context than the Anfal campaign, and above all the German Holocaust. Yet, as I have tried to demonstrate the two theories may also be applied to the Anfal campaign and increase our understanding of the process that so many Kurdish people have suffered from. Thus as regards Hilberg's three-step theory, we may conclude that the Kurdish people like the European Jews, were first defined as the target group, then replaced to special camps and then by use of various instruments, destroyed. In both cases bureaucratic aspects were an inherent part of the destruction plan. Kelman's three processes and at least those of Authorization and Dehumanization were effectively used by the Ba'athy regime as psychological tools to eliminate individual perpetrators' morals and to incite to commit crimes.

Application of the two theories affirms that the Anfal campaign entailed a well-organized strategy and policy intended to destroy the ethnic or national minority of Kurds in Northern Iraq. In other words, the campaign involved the commission of the 'crimes of crimes': Genocide. To prevent the future commission of genocide,

wherever in the world, it is of the utmost importance to study past genocides and to understand how those responsible for them thought, planned and acted.

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