

Southern Kurdistan: Building the Culture of Life

Sharon Linzey, Ph.D., J.D.

Thank you Dr. Kirmanj Gundi, Muazaz Amin and KNC for hosting another great annual conference here in Rockville, Maryland. I am honored to share in this session with Soraya Falah and thank you for the invitation to speak.

You certainly don't need me to lecture you about the effects of the Culture of Death. You understand this far better than anyone. My father fought in World War Two. He was on the USS Yorktown when it was sunk by the Japanese in the Battle of Midway. He swam in oil three inches thick for hours along with hundreds of other sailors until they were picked up by the USS Hornet who dropped nets down for them to hang on to. When the air raids resumed, the Hornet would leave them stranded in the water and take off. If a bomb dropped and the oil caught fire, they'd all have burned to a crisp. However, the Hornet kept returning until all were picked up and no fires were started. My father was 19 years old and frightened.

Aram Hemperian reminded us of President Wilson's promise after World War I, that the Kurds would have a state. We remember that the Allies, UK, France and the United States reneged on their promise to the Kurds and did not give them their State. I spoke with a Kurdish Lawyer from Sirnak near the

Turkish/Iraqi border recently. I asked him why he still believed in America. He said, "If anyone is likely to help the Kurds, it would be the Americans."

It is late, but I want to apologize for the U.S. betrayal of the Kurds after World War I. And even moreso, I apologize for the U.S. unwillingness to do anything during the hideous Anfal campaign of Saddam Hussein of 1987-89. It was unconscionable. We missed our greatest opportunity to help the Kurds at that time. I, too, share your dreams of a Kurdish state and I truly pray that you will continue to pursue avenues consistent with the Culture of Life in your legitimate pursuit of statehood.

In my studies of the atrocities against humanity in the twentieth and now the twenty-first century, I can see that Kurdistan, nearly alone, has stood for the Culture of Life as opposed to the Culture of Death in a sea of nations that have embraced the Culture of Death.

I appreciate the work of groups such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. It was wonderful that Mr. Samuel Jordan could share with us this morning. However, with all due respect, comparing the genocide of the Kurds with the neutrally based decision that our founding fathers made 200 years ago to make Washington D.C. a non-represented district without voting powers, long before it became an African-American dominated district is fantastic.

We all know about the horrific Anfal campaigns of Saddam Hussein against the innocent victims of Halabja, and his other targets against the village of Barzani and the 5,000 other villages in Kurdistan that Hussein systematically destroyed as he set about his genocidal campaign against the Kurds. We also know about Turkey's systematic massacre of the Kurds in southeast Turkey where 3,500 villages were destroyed. Syria and Iran also have colluded with Turkey and Iraq in a systematic torture and oppression of a people resulting in the diaspora of the world's largest ethnic minority—40 million strong. These were, 'offensive' wars aimed to satisfy the desires of dominant cultures against a minority people and they fly in the face of the U.N. Charter, the International Covenants and International Law.

There are four outstanding examples of Offensive wars that we can take note of in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries: the Anfal Campaigns of Saddam Hussein, the Axis offensive of World War Two involving the Nazi Holocaust, the Rwandan genocide, and the Darfur genocide. These are examples of what Dr. David Kazzaz of the University of Denver calls the Culture of Death.

On the other hand there are examples of the Culture of Life where we have models of positive strategies for resolving conflict.

Anfal

Saddam Hussein's infamous Anfal campaign was a systematic process of ethnic and cultural cleansing, mass murder and an attempt to erase the Kurds' national identity. It started with the mass murder of the Faily Kurds in 1987 when Ali Hassan al-Majid was given power over all state agencies in Iraq. The campaign officially ended in 1989, but the effects lasted much longer.

The devastation caused by the Anfal campaign was one of the most horrendous attacks on an ethnic people faced since the Nazi death camps of the Second World War. Not only was the impact of Anfal inconceivable, but it is incomprehensible that the world community would stand by and watch Saddam attempt genocide of the Kurdish people after the world's resolve following the Holocaust to never allow such treatment of human beings to repeat itself. Surely a Defensive war to preserve the life and liberty of the Kurds was called for to protect the Culture of Life and to ward off the murderous urges of a maniacal dictator. But it was not to be. The Culture of Death reigned and 180,000 innocent lives were lost. Anfal and other persecutions of the Kurds by Saddam Hussein cannot be ignored when considering any dimension of Kurdish society today.

The Axis Powers of World War Two

The Anfal legacy is all very reminiscent of World War Two where one hundred million military personnel were involved in the most widespread war in human history. James Dunnigan writes that seventy million people, the majority of them civilians, were killed during this war, making it the deadliest conflict in human history.ⁱ Adolf Hitler systematically killed twelve million Jews, Poles, Roma, Slavs, gay men, aged, sick, elderly and anybody else he deemed to be unfit in his quest for the perfect race.ⁱⁱ The targets of the Ustaše regime were mostly Serbs.ⁱⁱⁱ

The Japanese military murdered from 3 to 10 million civilians, mostly Chinese.^{iv} According to Mitsuyoshi Himeta, at least 2.7 million died during the Sanko Sakusen implemented in Heipei and Shantung by General Yasuji Okamura. Just last week I read an article by a Japanese piano maker who said that the Japanese government had taken every piece of wood from his family's piano shop as well as food from his entire community for the war effort. He said that the government would have starved his community to death had the United States not dropped the bomb when it did. Many stories of this nature are being revealed as sanctions are finally being lifted against citizens for telling the truth about what really happened during the War in Japan. Once again, we learn that nations that teach the Culture of Death, get Death and nations that teach the Culture of Life, get Life.

In the Soviet Gulag during this time, life in the labor camps led to the death of citizens of occupied countries such as Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, as well as German prisoners of war (POWs) and even Soviet citizens themselves who had been or were thought to be traitors or supporters of the Nazis.^v Sixty percent of Soviet POWs died during the war.^{vi} Richard Overy gives the number of 5.7 million Soviet POWs of whom 57% (3.6 million) died, or were killed.^{vii} Some of the survivors were treated as traitors when they returned to the USSR. Order 270 allowed for Soviet comrades to kill any Soviet soldier who was suspected of surrendering to the Nazis.^{viii} Their families were not allowed any social benefits and were either killed or allowed to starve to death.

Rwanda

But today, fifty years after World War Two, fifty years after the world resolved that such genocidal massacres could never be allowed to happen again, we have had the Rwandan genocide. A million Rwandans and moderate Hutus have been murdered since 1994.

Darfur

And sixty years after World War Two, after the civilized nations of the world swore that this could never happen again, the Sudanese military and the

Janjaweed have attacked the non-Arab minority in Darfur, slaying 500,000 in the process and displacing three million. In addition, the Sudanese government has killed witnesses, resulting in the International Criminal Court charging President Omar al Bashir of war crimes, crimes against humanity and murder. Bashir laughs at the charges, denies them and the Security Council resolutions against him go unheeded.

Results of the Culture of Death

We all know what conflict does to a family's ability to survive. Turkey and Iraq both destroyed not only Kurdish families and homes, but their crops, farm animals, orchards, livelihoods, and women and men were forcibly displaced and forced to flee to other countries to find refuge in camp settings.

The women left in Kurdistan have become both mothers and fathers of their children. They have become farmers. But at the same time, they have also become members of Parliament. Twenty-five percent of the Parliamentarians in southern Kurdistan are women, resulting in the highest rate of female Parliamentarians in the Middle East and most of Europe. We found during the First International Women's Conference in Kurdistan (2007) that there are over forty women's non-governmental organizations networking together in Kurdistan. The Kurdish Women's Rights Committee and now the World's Women for Life

movement has established leadership for the Culture of Life movement in Kurdistan and this movement is spreading throughout the world. The women leading these committees are successfully fighting against polygamy, female genital mutilation and honor killing. A Kurdish woman serves in the European Parliament. Leyla Zana has made huge inroads for Kurdish women in Turkey. In short, Kurdish women are bringing the Culture of Life to the world.

The problem is, as David Kazzaz articulately points out in his *Life Manifesto*, that “wars appear to be an inevitable part of human existence.”^{ix} Christ said, “There will always be wars and rumors of wars.”^x But what are we to do about it? Dr. Kazzaz suggests we use the same tools that the Culture of Death uses. For example, proponents of the Culture of Death use the media, so we should also use the media: the Internet, websites, videogames, etc. If more than a billion people are using the Web, then we should also be in there accessing the one-sixth of the population that is using it. You-Tube videos are a hugely popular way to get one’s message out.

Non-governmental organizations and women’s organizations are all over the globe. Soraya and I just filed the Articles of Incorporation for World’s Women for Life as a non-profit public charitable organization. This should allow us some freedom to raise funds and to begin to network for our purposes, which is to

instill the spirit of the Culture of Life in every nation of this world. This attitude and predisposition of infighting and warring as a means to resolve conflicts and international disputes has got to stop.

Therefore, in opposition to a Culture of Death wherein we are quick to destroy, and resort to violence of self or others, the Culture of Life is one of giving aid to others, lending a helping hand, seeking resolution of differences, seeking common ground, trying to find non-violent resolutions of differences, promoting the enjoyment of the arts and life-giving ventures.

I would like to reiterate that cultures that teach the Culture of Death will obtain the results of the Culture of Death. On the other hand, cultures that teach the Culture of Life will reap the benefits of the Culture of Life. Let us join the movement for the Culture of Life and support it with all of our hearts, minds and souls.

ⁱ Dunnigan, James. *Dirty Little Secrets of World War II: Military Information No One Told You About the Greatest, Most Terrible War in History*, William Morrow & Company, 1994.

ⁱⁱ "World War II: Combatants and Casualties (1937— 1945)"
<http://web.jjay.cuny.edu/~jobrien/reference/ob62.html>. Retrieved March 14, 2009.

ⁱⁱⁱ Todd, Allan. *The Modern World*, p. 121.

^{iv} Chang, Iris. *The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II*, p. 102.

^v "Gulag: Understanding the Magnitude of What Happened"
<http://www.heritage.org/Research/RussiaandEurasia/HL-800.cfm>, Retrieved March 14, 2009.

^{vi} "Soviet Prisoners of War: Forgotten Nazi Victims of World War II", <http://www.historynet.com/soviet-prisoners-of-war-forgotten-nazi-victims-of-world-war-ii.htm>, Retrieved March 14, 2009.

^{vii} Id.

^{viii} Order 270 mandated that anyone who surrendered to the enemy or who deserted was shot on sight and his family members were denied welfare or subsistence benefits. "The Warlords: Joseph Stalin," at <http://www.channel4.com/history/microsites/H/history/t-z/warlords1stalin.html>, Retrieved, March 14, 2009

^{ix} David Kazzaz, *Life Manifesto*, at <http://www.isime.org/media/pdf/LIFE-MANIFESTO-2009.pdf>, p.10.

^x Matthew 24:6.