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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Sub-Commission on the Promotion
and Protection of Human Rights

Fifty-seventh session

Item 6 (a) of the provisional agenda

**SPECIFIC HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES:
WOMEN AND HUMAN RIGHTS**

**Written statement* submitted by Liberation,
a non-governmental organization on the Roster**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[1 July 2005]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

Anfal women: A Specific Group and Individuals

Liberation calls upon the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights to further investigate the plight of Anfal women in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Referring to the numerous reports to the Commission on Human Rights issues in Iraq, Liberation is aware that the UN Special Rapporteurs have investigated the situation of Anfal men, women and children. We are aware that UN has been following the situations of the survivors of the Anfal campaign; nevertheless we are particularly concerned about the present condition of Anfal women and their children.

Mr Max van der Soel, Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights in his report of 25 February 1994 refers to the Anfal campaign which happened in 1988 (E/CN.4/1994/29). The Special Rapporteur refers to previous UN reports about the situation of women, children and elderly people in the Kurdish area who had been deported 'en masse' to so-called 'prohibited zones' (E/CN.4/1994/89). Liberation is concerned that most Anfal women are still live in camps, despite the fact that the Kurdistan Regional Government has been operating in the Kurdish areas.

Anfal ('spoils' in Arabic language) is a verse in the Koran referring to the spoils of war against non-believers. The term Anfal was used by Saddam Hussein for a series of operations against the Kurds in Iraq in the spring and summer 1988 during which thousands of Kurdish villages were destroyed and around 1.5 million people displaced. It is believed that approximately 182,000 people were killed during Anfal operations.¹

There are now approximately 7000 families living in Iraqi Kurdistan, the survivors of the Anfal campaigns. Most of them live in poor economic conditions, do not receive proper education and their needs are not met adequately. They do not receive appropriate help from the Kurdistan Regional Government and the Anfal widows specifically live in social isolation.²

Women survivors of Anfal operations who have lost male members of their family and have experienced all kinds of atrocities, including imprisonment, torture and rape, have had a marginalised and unhappy life since 1988. An Anfal widow who spoke at the Kurdish Women's International Conference in Stockholm, Sweden on 9-10 April 2005 talked about traumatic experiences and despondent lives during and after the Anfal operation. According to her testimony, even after the establishment of the Kurdistan Regional Government, apart from random and inadequate financial support, Anfal women and their families have not received proper and effective help. Instead of suitable medical and psychological attention they have been kept in camps in isolation and are being treated as outcasts.

Human Rights Watch in its report about the Anfal campaign, which was published in 1993, called it Genocide in Iraq. The report refers to the situation of women survivors of Anfal, as inhabitants of 'a netherworld of uncertainty.' It points out the fact that, according to the Islamic law, Anfal women are not allowed to marry until after seven years after the disappearance of their husbands.³ Most of these women have not remarried and are still wearing black and dark clothes to demonstrate their miserable life and reflect the grief in their hearts. Those who have

¹ Kerim Yildiz & Tom Blass, 'The Kurds in Iraq, The Past, Present and Future', Kurdish Human Rights Project, UK, December 2003

² Ibid

³ <http://hrw.org/reports/1993/iraqanfal/ANFAL13.htm>

not witnessed the death of their husbands and other family members, or are not sure about their death, still await their return.

According to Ms Adalet Omer, the head of the Anfal Centre and advisor to the Minister for Human Rights on Anfal in Erbil in Iraqi Kurdistan, the women relatives of the missing and murdered Kurds in the Anfal operation have led miserable lives and continue to suffer a great deal subsequently. These women, especially those who have heard no news from their lost relatives, have endured the worst impact of the Anfal operation. Their physical and psychological condition is becoming worse and they have no access to professional help and remedy for their problems.⁴

Recommendations

Liberation supports the following recommendations upon the demands made by the survivors of Anfal campaign and the participants of the Kurdish Women's International Conference in Sweden in April 2005:

- 1- Anfal campaign to be recognised as an act of genocide by the Ba'ath Regime in Iraq against the Kurdish people there.
- 2- To attract the International community's support for the survivors of the Anfal campaign through international seminars and conferences to demonstrate the suffering of the Kurdish people.
- 3- To call for further investigations by the United Nations Special Rapporteur into the crimes perpetrated against the Kurds and for practical measures to trace the missing people from the Anfal campaign.
- 4- To investigate urgently the situation of Anfal women and their children to set up immediate projects to meet their needs, in particular their physical and psychological health problems.
- 5- UN to monitor and pursue the trial of the perpetrators of Anfal campaign and demand an apology from the new Iraqi regime.
- 6- Survivors and families of the victims of Anfal to receive compensations for the loss of their relatives and for the physical and psychological damages they received.
- 7- UN to suggest and monitor international projects for the Anfal children's education and grant scholarships to them at International Universities

Further documents could be provided if required

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⁴ Paper submitted to the Kurdish Women's International Conference in Sweden, April 2005 by Ms Adalet Omer