

Saddam's Crimes on the Records

Iraqi Secret Police Files Archives

University of Colorado at Boulder

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The Captured Iraqi Secret Police Files is a project of the Human Rights Initiative of the University of Colorado at Boulder Archives. The initiative's purpose is to secure, preserve and make broadly available archival human rights evidence concerning contemporary international human rights affairs. The HRI has acquired the archives of many of the world's preeminent human rights organizations, including Amnesty International USA, Physicians for Human Rights, Human Rights Watch and others.

In addition to the 18 tons of original captured Iraqi Secret Police Files, HRI has secured a copy of a digital database of the 5.5 million-page collection produced by the Defense Intelligence Agency. The computer database is word searchable in English. Copies of the database also are held by the Defense Intelligence Agency, the Central Intelligence Agency, the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Human Rights Watch and the two Kurdish rebel factions that seized the materials -- the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan and the Kurdistan Democratic Party.

The Secret Police Files will be opened to the public for the first time under the auspices of the Human Rights Initiative at the University of Colorado at Boulder Archives. The materials were approved for shipment to the University of Colorado at Boulder from the National Archives by the chairman of the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Sen. Jesse Helms. The materials will be stored at an undisclosed location for security reasons.

The materials contain mass evidence of Iraq's genocidal Anfal campaign against the Kurdish minority population during the 1980s, including the repeated use of chemical weapons. The majority of files are from the offices of the General Security Directorate, Iraq's internal intelligence agency or secret police. The materials also include significant quantities of files from Iraq's military intelligence agency, which operates under the authority of the Office of the President in Baghdad. Other files from Saddam Hussein's senior leadership pertain to the Revolutionary Command Council, Iraq's highest legislative authority; the Special Security Apparatus, an internal intelligence organization based in Baghdad that spies on the other intelligence agencies; the National Security Council, an advisory group of security experts chaired by Saddam Hussein; and other government entities concerning Iraq's political, military and intelligence activities.

The files, spanning the period from the 1960s to 1991, also contain information on government policies, directives and decrees, military operations and troop movements including the use of chemical weapons during the Iran-Iraq War and against the Kurds, elimination of villages, disappearances, collaborators, pro-government Kurdish militias, the Arabization campaign for Kurdish areas, and the political and human rights situation during the crisis over Kuwait.

The materials were captured from Iraqi secret police stations; interrogation centers and prisons during a March 1991 uprising. Kurdish rebel leaders approved the military transport of the materials to the U.S. for safekeeping and analysis.

Human Rights Watch analyzed the materials finding strong and conclusive evidence of a genocidal campaign against the Kurds. Human Rights Watch is currently working toward bringing a case of genocide against Iraq before the International Court of Justice at The Hague.

Human Rights Watch estimates that the Anfal operation claimed between 50,000 and 100,000 lives in northern Iraq in 1988 alone, the zenith of the Iraqi counter-insurgency and genocidal campaign that lasted through the 1980s. HRW determined that at least 60 villages and the town of Halabja in Iraqi Kurdistan were attacked with mustard gas, nerve gas or a combination of the two in 1987-1988.

The Iraqi Secret Police Files include audio tapes of more than a dozen meetings between Ali Hassan al-Majid, the powerful secretary-general of the Ba'ath Party's Northern Bureau, and other senior Ba'ath officials in 1988 and 1989. The Ba'ath Arab Socialist Party is the ruling party of Iraq led by Saddam Hussein. An excerpt from the tapes, as reported in HRW's 1995 book, "Iraq's Crime of Genocide," follows:

"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 everywhere according to a systematic military plan. Even their strongholds. In our attacks we will take back one-third or one-half of what is under their control. If we can try to take two-thirds, then we will surround them in a small pocket and attack them with chemical weapons.

"I will not attack them with chemicals just one day, but I will continue to attack them with chemicals for 15 days. Then I will announce that anyone who wishes to surrender with his gun will be allowed to do so... So I will threaten them and motivate them to surrender. Then you will see that all the vehicles of God Himself will not be enough to carry them all. I think and expect that they will be defeated. I swear that I am sure we will defeat them."

Sources: Bruce Montgomery, curator and director, Archives, CU-Boulder
Human Rights Watch, Washington, D.C.
George Pickart, U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Patriotic Union of Kurdistan
Kurdistan Democratic Party