

KNC replies to Al-Jazeera

The Kurdish National Congress of North America

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In late December the dramatic *Al-Jazeera* posted the provocative article *What happened in Kurdish Halabja?* by Mohammed al-Obaidi . The article was full of lies, distortions, and pure hate towards the Kurds, and raised the ire of many decent people - Kurds and non-Kurds alike.

Unfortunately, the rabble-rousing style of *Anti-Kurdishism* displayed in the article, both in tone and in content, has become a hallmark of the rhetoric of many of the Arab *Uber-Nationalists* and *Saddam rehabilitators* who are regularly allowed media exposure on Arab television and through the print media.

In the *Al-Jazeera* piece, al-Obaidi unabashedly denies and belittles the cold-blooded murder of over 5,000 Kurds in Halabja and thousands more in scores of other places as political manipulations and lurid imagination. He further compounds his claims by a slanderous and personal attack on the Washington Kurdish Institute, its Founder, its Board of Directors, and its Executive Director.

The writer's litany of cheap shots and baseless accusations is in reality no more than a collection of standard clichés torn from the pages of the conspiracy theories that the Arab media are so fond of, and so full of, these days.

These personal attacks aside, his incredulous denial of the *massacre* of Halabja is a grave matter for all peace loving people and is a desecration of the memory of the thousands of innocent Kurdish women and children murdered by Saddam and his minions during his tyrannical reign.

This bizarre denial of recently witnessed events transcends the pale of human tolerance and forgiveness. Indeed, it is sadly reminiscent of the fabrications of the propaganda machine of Joseph Goebbels in trying to put a civilized face on the rape of Europe or on Hitler's *Final Solution* to the Jewish problem. This should come as no surprise, however. Did these not provide the inspiration for the slogan *Arabism Uber Alles*, championed by the founder of the Ba'ath party Michael Aflak and fellow travelers?

Mr. al-Obaidi bases his allegations on the oft quoted, and as often repudiated and discredited, report by the CIA analyst Stephen Pellitiere, the sum total of which he apparently reveres as the absolute gospel truth. Little does he realize, or care to find out, that when it comes to the chemical wars waged by Saddam against the Kurds, the report is utterly flawed - a collection of self-assured assertions by a politician turned scientist, who by venturing into the realm of chemistry and medicine without proper footing, reaches all the wrong conclusions.

Pellitiere's arguments for throwing the blame for Halabja on the Iranians (reiterated by the author) do not take into account Saddam's record of raining chemical terror on over forty other Kurdish locations, and of Iraq's use of a cocktail of chemical agents (Sulfur Mustard, Tabun, Sarin, Soman, VX) whose clinical signs were very much consistent with all the ill effects suffered by the victims, including the cyanosis and hypoxia that he mistakenly attributes solely to Hydrogen Cyanide or *blood gases* (wherever he got that term!); something which he says that the Iranian (but not the Iraqi) army possessed. Further, it completely ignores the telltale signs of the long-term effects (teratogenicity, mutagenicity, carcinogenicity etc.) of the chemical agents' cocktail used by the Iraqi army in its attempt to annihilate or subjugate the Kurds. A fact that has been amply documented by, among others, Dr. Christine Gosden in hands-on studies at Halabja and elsewhere in Kurdistan.

Additionally, the Iranian army had no reason to gas its own soldiers who had occupied Halabja at the time, but the Iraqi army had ample reasons to do so inasmuch as chemical warfare had by then become part and parcel of the notorious *Anfal* operations aimed at a *final solution* for the irksome Kurdish prick in their side.

As trivial as these insolent remarks may seem, they are troubling and are disturbingly more than skin deep. For, in addition to their being a distortion of history, they manifestly reveal the chauvinism still harbored in the heart of some Arab zealots and extremists in Iraq and elsewhere in Arab world. Such sentiments do not bode well for the future of the Kurds in Iraq and are ominous signs of what is to come.

The Kurdish National Congress of North America (KNC) strongly denounces this malicious attack against a celebrated Kurdish institution and condemns all similar desperate and vengeful adventures by fringe groups such as the *Al-Kifah al-Shabi* (the author's stated affiliation) that are aimed at derailing the liberation of Iraq and its peaceful procession towards democracy.

In denouncing these outrageous attempts at discrediting the revered Washington Kurdish Institute (WKI), the Kurdish National Congress wishes to reaffirm its admiration, complete trust in, and high regard for the valuable work carried out by WKI, its president Dr. Najmaldin Karim, its Executive Director Mr. Mike Amitay, and its Board of Directors.