

The Situation of the Yezidis in Armenia

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(Yezidi publication based in Germany) January 2003
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"I am a captive in my own country also."

By a Yezidi author

I am a Kurdish writer. I am from Armenia and I am a Yezidi. I left my country for exile (Germany) to escape the oppression by the Armenian state and the nationalist gangs that were established by the state. I believe that no one in this country knows well the situation of the Yezidis. It seems that people who work for the immigration office do not distinguish Yezidis from the Armenians.

With the reforms and reorganizations of the 1980s that took place within the framework of prestroika of Gorbachov, many nationalistic and reactionary movement emerged. Comical and hard core reactionary parties took reign of power from the progressive and democratically minded people. In the war for the

mountainous region of Karabakh, armed groups and the regional government decided that no one else but only Armenians would live in the region. They forced other inhabitants such as Azerbaijanis, Kurds, Belorussians, and Assyrians out of the area. Those who were expelled from the area are now scattered all over the world. The Armenians aimed at keeping the country only for themselves. Within two years, the Armenians expelled hundreds of thousands of non-Armenian people from Armenia. That is why the world community and other countries heard about this.

To implement their plans, in cities and villages, everyday the racist colonialists would direct their arrows of poison toward minority nations. Everywhere they established armed militants (Fedayee). They had hatred for non-Armenians. Who were these Fedayees, one wonders? In our opinion which reflects the reality, they were thieves, murderers and crooks. They had a dark past and accomplished nothing worthwhile. Although they got arrested a few times, each time they were out, these armed thugs insulted the minorities. Their job was like that of a wolf, to attack the herd of sheep without a shepherd. It seemed that these aggressors were not going to stop there. Then, the gangs and armed bandits took over the public spaces and intensified their hatred and aggression.

With the help of the state, they would attack military and police stations to confiscate arms and ammunition. They did a lot

of cruelty to peaceful and innocent people. They burned the homes of the innocent and wrote on the doors: "Runaway, go; otherwise it will be your end." They robbed a lot of people, confiscated their land and property by force, took away their machinery. And the people could not defend themselves and their rights.

Beatings, verbal abuse and other unpleasantries became the norm. And the Yezidies got their share of this treatment. In the city of Yerevan, a Yezidi Kurd named Alik Hasanyan was arrested and in front of thousands of people was burned alive. He was charged with killing an Armenian girl and a boy. Later on it became evident that he was not the killer. He had absolutely nothing to do with the killings. Another Yezidi from the Artashat region was gunned down in broad daylight for no reason. Their hatred and aggression went beyond cold - blooded murder. As it is evident from President Levon Ter Petrosyan's speech at the Congress of the Fedayeen in 1993, "this organization and its armed militants cleaned the country from non-Armenians" He implied that the armed militants of the HHS [an Armenian party] accomplished this sacred duty. Fearing these gangs and their leader, lots of people abandoned their homes and moved to other countries and cities.

At present time, one can say that 98% of the population of Armenia consists of Armenians. There are very few Yezidies left in Armenia and they are very old and very poor who are un-

able to move away. They lost their savings and wealth of hundreds of years. International human rights organizations and the world public opinion do not know these atrocities. Maybe these atrocities were not newsworthy since the world was mesmerized by the war between the Azeris and Armenians and the Karabakh issue or the collapse of the Soviet Union. Outsiders came to believe that most non-Armenians left the area for economic reasons, not due to the oppression and cruelty of the Armenian state.

Despite much cruelty and oppression, Armenia has become a member of a few democratic organizations and is striving to become a member to the Council of the European Union. And the Kurds have no rights there.

Thousands of people escaped to Russia without knowing what awaits them there in the future. Will Russia refuse them asylum and throw them out? This would not be surprising. There is a very dirty propaganda against the Kurdish people. Both intellectuals and ignoramuses, the good and the bad all work against the Kurds and make them the target of their poisoned arrows. The Kurds have very little to rely on and are without a nest. Even though the Kurds of Armenia, including the Yezidis and non - Yezidis number no more than 60 thousand soul, Armenian authorities are afraid that the Kurds might establish a Kurdistan on the soil of Armenia.

Authorities claim that Kurds are supporters of Turkey and are

after snatching away part of Armenia as Kurdistan. Such false claims mobilized a lot of Armenians and instilled hatred in their hearts toward the Kurds in Armenia. A few Armenians who were not beguiled by these lies, were treated as enemies and servants. There came a time when neighbors became the enemy of neighbors. The most disgusting attempt was the one that aimed to separate the Yezidies from the Kurds. They claimed that "Yezidies were not Kurds. Yezidies were a people onto themselves and had no relations with the Kurds." During the census in Armenia, they undercounted the Yezidies. They claimed that Yezidi writers and intellectuals were to be blamed for this lack of delineation because they failed to separate the Yezidies from the Kurds. We assert that such lies have no foundation, no truth value. We stress that Yezidies are the fountainhead of Kurdishness, they are the real Kurds. It is true that the Yezidi religion is no more wide spread among the Kurds, but we surely are Kurds. Kurdish intellectuals, Yezidi and non-Yezidi, denounced such views. Many Yezidies left their homeland after such aggression. And are still doing so in droves. Our people were very desperate and scattered in haste to the old Soviet Republics. Now, a brother does not know where his other brother is. From whatever angle one looks at it, our people have become refugees without shelter and rights.

The retirees who worked for more than forty years, have lost their pensions. The Armenians are forcing them to leave the

country. The Armenians are telling them: "Go to your own homeland!!" Well, one has to ask as to where the Yezidi homeland is? We believe that no one sees the dire situation of the Yezidies. There are two faces of the Armenian state: With one face, it wants to expel the non-Armenian population out of Armenia, with the other face, it wants to claim to the world that "Armenia is a democratic republic and everyone living in it is equal. The Yezidies are free and they have a good time there. Those who escape out of Armenia do so out of economic desperation, not due to oppression."

We wish to tear down this curtain that hides this shame and let the whole world see the true face of Armenia. Yezidies are not employed by the state. Before the fall of the Soviets, the Yezidies in rural areas used to work in the Kolkhozes. They were peasants there. Today, those Kolkhozes are long gone. Yezidies in towns used to work as street sweepers. Today, even such professions are denied to them. If the trend continues like this, the Yezidies are going to vanish from Armenia and from the face of the earth. If this ancient culture/teaching disappears, it will be due to the deeds of the Armenian state. Out of desperation, sometimes Yezidies of Armenia even dare to escape to the Turkish side of the border where the Kurds are slated for elimination. The Yezidies are afraid to let the world know what is happening to them. They are afraid to say that Kurdish is their mother tongue and that they are denied all rights in Armenia. Even at

times the world lent an ear to their plight, many Yezidies say that they were free in Armenia and denied any claims of oppressed in Armenia. You could guess why.

The rights that the Soviet Union recognized for the Kurds in 1930s are rescinded. We had a newspaper called "Riya Taze" (the new path), research institutes, education in Kurdish language. Today we have none of these.

Everything is under the control of the armed bandits. The Armenian state is waging a very dirty war against Kurdish intellectuals through nationalist organizations like PYUNIK, HINCHAK, HAYASTANI and LIRAGIR. The state sees Kurdish intellectuals as servants, hands and tails of outside agents that are bent to harm Armenia.

Many Kurdish intellectuals were put on trial for saying "Yezidies are Kurds." And the courts would sentence these Kurdish intellectuals. Despite the fact that Kurdish intellectuals defended the brotherhood of both Kurds and Armenians, still these Armenian organizations went against the Kurds. A Yezidi academic, Prof. Dr. Sihide Ibo got killed in the hands of such aggressors and criminals. None of the killers are found and brought to trial. They threw Dr. Dewreshian under a car and ran him over. The body of Hesên Abbasian was dumped at the outskirts of Yerevan a month after. The majority of the intellectuals then left Armenia. This, in summary, is the situation of the Yezidies in Armenia.