

Critical Study of Human Rights Violation in Iraq and Syria:

By

¹Muhammad Hanif Bizenjo, ²Para Din

Abstract:

Syria and Iraq have always been having the prime importance, due to which, both these countries were in the clinches of many colonial powers. Time and again both these states had been the epicentres of human rights violations. The rights of people were violated in different stages by internal and external forces. The political, socio-economic, cultural and religious rights were bulldozed repeatedly. Rights of freedom of speech, freedom of religion, were violated on wide scale. Thousands were killed inhumanly. Illegal use of poisonous gases further devastated human rights situation in both states. Freedom of expression suffered. Rights of freedom of sovereignty of both states were violated by the foreign invaders. In addition to that, the ISIS, Al-Qauida and other militant organizations, the USA, the regional powers, internal groups in both countries and the governments of both states were involved in the violation of human rights in Iraq and Syria. This study will analyse human rights violation in Iraq and Syria.

Keywords: Human rights violation, Iraq, Syria, ISIS, UNHDR, Socio-economic, Religious and Political rights. Etc.

Introduction:

Human rights play pivotal role in socio, economic, political and cultural development of any nation. It is by dint of human rights, upon which the smooth running of a progressive, civilised and happy life is possible. Rights distinguish man from animals. Every religion, every constitution and every

¹M.Phil. Scholar, Department of Area Study Centre, University of Balochistan, Quetta Pakistan

²Dr. Para Din, Research Supervisor and Assistant Professor, Department of Area Study Centre, university of Balochistan, Quetta Pakistan

country supports human rights. Similarly, the UNO has granted tremendous human in its famous UNHDR declaration of 1948. These rights include socio, economic, political, religious and other rights. Right of education, food and shelter for all, RIGHT to social security, right of democracy, right of public assembly, rights of marriages, family, right of work, right of freedom of speech and right of forming party. As for as human rights situation in two middle eastern countries are concerned, sadly the picture is gloomy. As the Arab Islamic tradition gives importance to human rights. However, in Syria and Iraq the situation is reversed. The people of both the states had been and have been deprived of rights of justice, right of vote, right of free trial, right of forming party, etc. After the end of colonial era, the situation became more pathetic. Kinships and monarchies tried to snatch the basic rights from the people and tried to stop the voices of the people. The women folk suffered the most. Political rivals were harshly cracked down. Furthermore, tough labour laws prohibited women from right of job, vote and business. Moreover, the Al-Qauida, the ISIS, can also be held responsible for the deterioration of human rights. Despite it, the foreign invaders like the USA, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Russian interference in the domestic affairs of Iraq and Syria further halted human right in these two countries. Apart from the internal civil wars, proxies and sectarian differences also created human rights abuses in these states. The Zaidi Sect suffered the most. In addition to that, the Kurds and other minorities in both states were deprived of their basic human rights of politics, religion and economy. The situation became worsened when the Shia-Sunni rift accelerated with rapid speed in different regimes especially in the regime of Saddam Hussain and Assad dynasty. The flood of mass killing, abuse of rights, torturing the innocent civilians and abduction of political rivals and journalist were seen time and again in Syria and Iraq.

Human Rights Violation in Syria and Iraq:

Politics plays cardinal role in the development of any nation. It is because of politics and democracy people are aware of their rights. They elect their representatives who further works for the well-being and safeguard of the basic rights of the people. In the absence of democracy and pure leadership, the human rights of people are snatched on large scale. This is what happened and happening in Syria and Iraq. Unfortunately, political rights had been violated in these countries continuously. Due to which the fulfilment of the wishes of the people become impossible. Political rights contain right of vote, contesting election, making political parties and etc. These rights have also been endorsed by the UNHDR, which says that every citizen has right of vote, election and forming a party. As for as the human

rights violation in Iraq and Syria is concerned, the situation of political freedom is dismal. In Syria Assad's party one party rule has violated the basic concept of political freedom. It has never been allowed democracy and political opposition. In this regard they rigged election, they banned political parties. They abused the right of vote and right of contesting elections. Resultantly, the political human rights are still violated.

“A 2011 decree allowed registration of new political party, but it also imposed significant obstacle to party information and prohibited parties based on religion and regional affiliation and other criteria.” (www.freedom.com).

Similarly, in Iraq before Saddam Hussain the kinship had also violated freedom. After toppling kinship of Saddam Hussain came into power and started the violation of political freedom. In this regard Con Cogle in his book Saddam, the king of terror says,

“During the time of Saddam Hussain people were deprived of forming parties and Bhat party was the major party of the state. The same situation has been happening in Syria where Assad family had not allowed other parties to operate. The history reveals that people were deprived of their basic political rights of right of vote, right of forming party and right of contesting election freely.” (Con).

Saddam Hussain did not allow Shia and Kurds to participate in politics. The one party rule of BHHAT party ruled the country without any other opposition party. Which was against the basis of political freedom. Unfortunately, this situation has been changed after the invasion of USA since 2003. Political victimization is on peak. Baath party has banned. Political engineering is increasing in Iraq. Which is against the human rights.

Similarly, women rights are the back bone of human right. Women folks which is about half of humanity, plays pivotal role in the socio, economic and cultural development of any nation. The more women are empowered the more a society will be prosperous. If these rights are violated, not only the family but also the state and society suffer. It is a sad reality that women right in Iraq and Syria are violated on large scale. Women were raped, abducted, tortured, and sexually harassed. They were stopped from getting education. They were stopped from participating in politics. Women specially lack quota in politics. In this regard the world bank in its report of March 7, 2017 says in such words that, “Most MENA countries do not have women quotas in parliament. Women representation in MENA, s Justice

system is lower than in politics and number of female justices disprove. The proportion of women quota in Iraq is 10.80% while in Syria is 9.20%.” (World Bank, 2017).

More, in Iraq, the ISIL harshly violated women rights. Yazidi mothers and their children were brutally persecuted. Their mothers were sold to another’s and were bought back from each other. Their women were raped and beaten. These women faced psychological problems. Which was the clear cut violation of the humanity and the UN charter of human right. The enslaved women. They abducted women. They abused their rights time and again. According to Amnesty report of 2017,

“under the ISIS control women and minority communities have been victimized. 4000 Yazidi women are still in the captivity of ISIS.” (The Economist).

Furthermore, gender based violence in Syria has always been seen. Women were sexually harassed. They were compelled to forced marriages and were killed honourly. These forced marriages, honour killing and sexual harassment were against the UN charter of the human rights.

“A study of 2013 found that women in Syria were increasingly forced into marriages and rape to avoid honour killing.” (Freedom house, 2010).

Apart from this, “Sexual violence is also on peak in Syria. In 2013 at least 38000 victims of sexual violence were treated by UN.” (U.N Report, 2014).

Enforced disappearances and illegal detentions are against the basic fundamental rights, which has always been a serious issue in Syria and Iraq for decades. The citizens of these two countries were deprived of free trail and were tortured, ill-treated and denied of justice. Mostly, journalists, political rivals and religious minorities kept in captivity. In this regard human rights watch in its report of 2017 says,

“More than 117,000 have been detained or disappeared since 2011, the vast majority by government forces, including 4557 between January and June 2016, according to the Syrian network for human rights. Torture and detention and ill treatment are rampant in detention facilities. Thousands have been died in detention.” (Human Rights Watch Report, 2017).

In addition, “In Syria in August 2016 the SNHR attributed 96 percent of estimated forced disappearances too government, the government forces

targeted journalists, anti-government protestors and medical personals.” (SNHR Report, 2016).

As for as situation in Iraq is concerned, the situation has been worst for decades. Like Shia and Kurds were tortured and disappeared during Saddam regime. Similarly, now the BHAT party is facing the same fate. Its leaders are in the bars. And the political rivals are being tortured and disappeared.

“During the 1980s the victims included a huge variety of people and groups Arabs, Kurds, Assyrians, Sunni and Shia Muslims, Turkmen, Christians and other women, men and children and their families, members of prohibited political parties were disappeared by Iraqi forces.” (Country Report, 2017).

Another human rights violation happened in the arena of culture. Both Iraq and Syria have rich cultures and cultural heritages. Unfortunately, these were impacted due to terrorism and violence in both Muslim countries. The ISIL destroyed historical and religious buildings. They devastated them. They looted them and smuggled the cultural and old assets. The 850 years old great al-Nuri Mosque in Mosul was destroyed in the battle of Mosul of 2017. It is an undeniable fact that the UNESCO has declared the destruction of cultural heritages as war crime. The ISIS has carried on the destruction time and again. According to Khalidi al Thie, In Iraq the fall of Mosul in June 2014 and fall of 2015, ISIS had plundered and destroyed at least 28 historical religious buildings. (Taje, 2015).

In addition to that, the ISIL has carried out deliberate destruction of cultural art fate and heritages which they see as monuments of Idolatry. (www.artnetnwes.com).

As for as the destruction of cultural heritages of Syria is concerned, the scenario in Syria is not different from Iraq. Between the wars of Assad regime and Daesh, many cultural heritages were devastated. Many treasures of antique time were stolen. According to UNHCR,

“The war has dealt a heavy blow to the cultural Heritages of Syria. As a result, the fighting between Assad and Daesh, many of treasures of Palmyres, an ancient city of Rome and a distinguished world heritage site have been reduced to rubble- including the temple of Bel and façade of the second century amphitheatre. It has been noted that the destruction of these sites was deliberate and had no military value.” ([www.1](#) library).

Hence, it can be said that the wars in Iraq and Syria had deteriorated the cultural heritages, buildings and assets of both the states. Which was a clear cut act of human rights violation.

Another human right violation in Iraq and Syria was the abuse of ethical minorities rights in both the states. The Kurds, The Zaidi's, the Shia in Iraq, all were brutalized. They were forced to exile. In this regard GSDRC in its report of 2011 says while quoting the economist that,

“At risks groups the most vulnerable ethnic\religious groups in Iraq appears to be the Yazidis and Kurds in Syria and Iraq. Sectarian clashes have increased and the eruption of violence has been occurring time and Again there.” (The Economist Report, 2013).

As for as the human rights violation in the field of minorities rights in Iraq is concerned, the Shia and Kurds were brutalized by the Saddam regime. The Christians, the Kurds, The Mandeans, ZOROASTRIANS, Kakais, and other minorities were tortured and brutalized. Apart from that the ISIL persecuted, abducted and killed thousands of Yazidis in Iraq. According to a report,

“ISIL action against the Yazidis population have resulted approximately, 500,000 refuges and several thousand killed and kidnapped.” (ISIS Terror, 2017).

Apart from this UNAMI has come across the cases where many families were slaughtered by the ISIL.

Another data gives the figure of ISIL atrocities on Yezidis,

“As of August 2016, between 2000 and 5500 Yazidi people have been killed by ISIL since 3 August 2016.” (Joseph, 2014).

As for as the situation in Syria is concerned the minorities in Syria were not only brutalized by the Syrian government but also by the ISIL. There are many evidences where the minorities were killed, abducted and kidnapped. The ISIL is responsible for the genocide of Christian minorities with the region of control in Iraq and Syria.

Hence, it is pertinent to say that the minorities in both Iraq and Syria were killed, abducted and brutalized by the government, by the ISIL and others. Which was a clear violation of human rights in both states.

Apart from this, another human rights violation which took place in both Iraq and Syria was the use of chemical weapons. The governments of both

states, the Russia, the USA, and the ISIS used chemical weapons. The use of chemical weapons is against the humanity. And the UNO strictly, forbids this. In Syria, the USA used chemical weapons in Sheikhan airport bombardment. Furthermore, the UNO also alleged the Syrian government for using Serene gas against the citizens of the Syria. Apart from this, the ISIS used chemical weapons in both Iraq and Syria. According to amnesty international report 2017,

“ISIL forces have carried out suspected chemical weapons, for example, munitions fired by ISIL in Umo, Hawash near Maria Hailito on 16 September 2016 caused blistering and other symptoms common with exposure to mutated agents.” (Amnesty International, 2017).

Another human rights violation was in the field of expression. Press has been considered one of the basic right of the people. It is considered the forth pillar of the state. Freedom of Expression has always been a sever human rights crisis in middle eastern countries especially in Iraq and Syria. People have always been deprived of their fundamental rights of expression. Journalists have been tortured and detained in these countries. From Saudi Arabia to Iran, from Turkey to Egypt and from Iraq to Syria, peoples voice has always been stopped. In this regard the economists (Unholy silence-freedom of speech Jan 27-2015) said quoting reporters without borders about middle east, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and Saudi Arabia that,

“The middle east is by almost any reckoning the world’s worst region for freedom of expression. Reporters without borders, a press freedom lobby put war torn Syria on 177th out of 180 countries on its latest annual ranking in 2014.” (The Economist, 2015).

The reporters without borders in its annual ranking of 2018 about Iraq says that,

“In freedom of expression out of 180 countries Iraq is on 160 number.” (Reporters, 2018).

Apart from freedom of expression, the human rights of Iraqi and Syrian people were violated in religious field too. Right of religion and freedom of worship is one of the basic fundamental rights. But unfortunately in major middle eastern countries for instance in Saudi Arabia Sunni Islam is the official religion while in Iran Shia sect is dominated force. In Israel Judaism is the official religion while the followers of other religions face sever crisis of religious freedom. Apart from this Yazidi community has always been struggling for the protection in Iraq. In this regard GSDRC in its report of 2011 says while quoting the economist,

“At risks groups the most vulnerable ethnic\religious groups in Iraq appears to be the Yazidis and Kurds in Syria and Iraq. Sectarian clashes have increased and the eruption of violence has been occurring time and again there.” (The Economist, 2017).

Another area in which human rights were violated was the area of corruption. Corruption is one of the worst forms of human rights violation. In Syria and Iraq, the undemocratic and aristocratic rulers were and are indulged in corruption for the fulfilment of employment of their illegal aims. Employment were snatched by the rulers. In this regard Forbes Magazine in its report of 2017 says,

“The worst performer is Syria, which is ranked 173rd out of 176 countries, followed by Yemen, Sudan, Libya and Iraq. It is no coincidence that all of these countries are poor and war-revenged, but even in the wealthier and more peaceful corner of the region, the problem of corruption is generally getting worse rather than better.” (Forbes, 2017).

Apart from this the quality standard of life plays cardinal role in the progress of any nation. This is one of the basic human right which has been granted by the UN charter of human rights. It is sad to observe that the basic right was abused in both Syria and Iraq by the militant organizations, by their governments, by the USA and Russia. Moreover, their education, protection of life, poverty and jobs felt serious threats and jolts, which has deteriorated the prosperity of both states. The health sector has deteriorated. The clean water availability in both states is equal to none. According to a report, 10 per cent people use clean water. The poverty is about 80 per cent. In Syria, unemployment is about 50 per cent. Which has brought both the nations on the verge of destruction. According to the world happiest report of 2019,

“Syria understandably ranked near the bottom of chart in 2019 with a ranking of 149\156. Due to low GDP growth per capita, per capita upon, low social and freedom to make choices and of course the current instability considering the ongoing situation.” (World Happiness Report, 2019).

The situation in Iraq is no better than Syria. According to the same report Iraq ranks 126 out of 156 countries.

Conclusion:

To conclude, it can be assessed that human rights violation has been the orders of the day in Iraq and Syria. Many parties were involved and are involved in this menace. The Saddam regime, the Assad family, the governments, the Al- Qaida, the ISIS, the USA and Russia, all are involved in the abuse of human rights violation. They violated human rights in myriad of fields like violation of women rights, political rights, use of chemical weapons, abduction of people, forced marriages, religious freedom, and freedom of expression. Consequently, the governments of Iraq and Syria harshly cracked down political rivals for their vested interests. They further destabilised society by banned political, democratic and religious parties. In addition to that, they snatched the voices of the people by depriving them from freedom of expression. Resultantly, both the states are suffering in every sphere of life. Their societies decayed. Their economies declined. And both the nations are still in the index of under-developed nation.

References:

- Amnesty international 2017. P351
- Cough Lin Con. Saddam king of terror. Harper Collins publisher
- Country report on human rights practices for 2017 united nations
department states bureau of democracy, human rights and law
- Forbes Magazine JAN 2017
- Freedom house, women rights for middle east and north America 2010,
Syria, 8,9,2010
- Human rights watch report 2017
- ISIS terror, one Yazidi battle to chronicle the death of people, MSNBE, 23
November 2015, Retrieved 17 March 2016.
- Khalid al-Taie (13 February 2015), Iraq Churches-Mosques under ISIS
attack. Mawtani-al-ahorfa.com
- Lev, Joseph 1515, CNN archived from the original on August 7, 2014,
retrieved August 7 2014
- Reporters without borders, 2018
- SNHR report 2016
- The economist (unholy silence-freedom of speech Jan 27, 2015
- The economist report 2013
- The economist.
- The economist. GSDRC report Jan 2017
- Tom Miles UN report. Reuters 8 January 2014
- World Bank report 2017 on Syria and Iraq by Human rights watch (Syrian
network for human rights)
- World happiness report 2019
- www.artnet news\ a momental loss: here are the significant cultural sites.
The ISIS, has destroyed to date. May 30, 2017

[www.freedom](http://www.freedomhouse.com/freedom-in-the-world-2018/syria-profile) house.com/freedom in the world 2018/Syria profile

www.1 library. Com the Syrian conflict- EMS: Cultural heritages and the
conflict