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The Multiple Impacts of Population Displacement and the Demolition of Kirkuk Citadel (1989-1998)

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Abstract: This study highlights a significant cultural and civilizational crime committed against Kirkuk Citadel. This crime began with a political decision by the Iraqi government in 1989 to displace the residents of Kirkuk Citadel under the pretext of renovation. Subsequently, another political decision was made by the former President of Iraq during his visit to Kirkuk city on March 16, 1990, to demolish the citadel. Following this decision, the local administration in the city formed a committee to expropriate residential homes and heritage buildings and displace their residents to areas outside the citadel. Later, the residential buildings and heritage sites were demolished, and funds were allocated for this process. The demolition of Kirkuk Citadel began in two phases: the first phase started in 1990, and the second phase in 1998. This study aims to uncover the political and professional reasons and motives behind the decision to displace the residents and demolish Kirkuk Citadel. It also analyzes the role played by the policy of ethnic and cultural cleansing in this decision and its impact on human heritage, relying on official documents. The study is structured around several main axes: The first axis provides a historical overview of Kirkuk Citadel, including its historical and civilizational importance and the most prominent phases it has undergone. The second axis discusses the phase of Kirkuk Citadel's renovation and the displacement of its residents in 1989. The third axis addresses the stages of Kirkuk Citadel's demolition during the years 1990-1998 and analyzes the political and cultural motives behind the demolition process. Finally, the fourth axis examines the multiple impacts of the displacement of the citadel's residents and its demolition on the city's cultural, ethnic, and historical heritage.

Keywords: Iraq, Kirkuk Citadel, Ethnic Cleansing, Cultural Cleansing, Historical Identity.

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1. Introduction

Kirkuk is one of the oldest cities in the world, with its roots tracing back to the dawn of civilizations in Mesopotamia. At its center, the city embraces an ancient fortress, known as Kirkuk Citadel, the founding history of which is shrouded in mystery due to the lack of archaeological excavations [1], [2]. The Citadel is rich in numerous archaeological sites of high heritage and architectural value, embodying various ethnic and religious cultures throughout the ages, but it simultaneously faces immense challenges. These include continuous conflicts and political instability, as well as the neglect of many aspects of this important city, including its rich cultural and archaeological history [2].

The importance of this study lies in shedding light on a political decision made by the former President of Iraq during his visit to Kirkuk on March 16, 1990, to demolish Kirkuk Citadel. Subsequently, the local administration in the city formed a committee to carry out the demolition of residential buildings and heritage sites the following day, and funds

were allocated for it [3]. The demolition of Kirkuk Citadel began in two phases: the first phase started in 1990, and the second phase in 1998.

The study relies on the historical method to analyze historical documents and conduct interviews with eyewitnesses to the displacement and demolition process, in addition to an analytical description of the events and reasons behind the political decision for ethnic and cultural cleansing and the erasure of historical identity [4], [5]. This is achieved by relying on historical sources, especially official documents, including central and local government reports, speeches and memos from the Department of Antiquities Inspectorate in Kirkuk and the General Authority of Antiquities in the Ministry of Culture and Antiquities during that period. Furthermore, the study relies on oral history through interviews with citadel residents, local historians, and archaeology experts, as well as secondary sources including books and studies on contemporary Iraqi history and academic articles in the field of history and archaeology [6].

The study seeks to answer the main questions: What were the goals and motives of the political regime in deciding to displace the residents of Kirkuk Citadel in 1989? What were the reasons behind the Iraqi government's decision to demolish Kirkuk Citadel? What are the accounts and eyewitness testimonies of the displacement and demolition of the Citadel in 1990? And a set of sub-questions: Did the policy of ethnic and cultural cleansing play a role in decision-making? What is the impact of the displacement and demolition of Kirkuk Citadel on the city's cultural, ethnic, and historical heritage? What are the multiple effects (social, economic, and cultural) of displacing the residents of Kirkuk Citadel?

The study aims to uncover the political and professional reasons and motives behind the decision to displace the residents and demolish Kirkuk Citadel, and to analyze the role played by the policy of ethnic and cultural cleansing in decision-making and its impact on human heritage, relying on official documents [7], [8], [9]. This will be explored through the study's main axes: The first axis addresses a historical overview of Kirkuk Citadel, its historical and civilizational importance, and the most prominent stages it has undergone. The second axis discusses the phase of Kirkuk Citadel's restoration and the displacement of its residents in 1989. The third axis covers the phases of Kirkuk Citadel's demolition during the years 1990-1998 and analyzes the political and cultural motives behind the demolition process. The fourth axis addresses the multiple effects of displacing the citadel's residents and its demolition on the city's cultural, ethnic, and historical heritage, in addition to a conclusion, recommendations, and a list of sources and references [10].

1. Historical Overview of Kirkuk Citadel: Its Historical and Cultural Significance.

Historical evidence suggests that the Guti people likely laid the initial foundations for Kirkuk, as ecological excavations have proven the existence of a city known as (Arrapha or Aranja or Arfa).

Kirkuk has been known by various names throughout the historical periods the region has witnessed. The Iraqi archaeologists Taha Baqir and Fuad Safar concluded that the ancient name for Kirkuk is (Arrapha-Arrapha). According to historical stages, the names varied, including (Karkh- Salukh, Karkhini, Gargar, Garmakan-Gamarkan, Begorme...etc.) The first written record of the current form (Kirkuk) appeared during the reign of Timur (1370-1405 AD) in Sharaf Ali Yazdi's book "Zafarnama" in the fifteenth century AD [11].

At the city's center stands a prominent archaeological citadel known as Kirkuk Citadel. The history of its founding is shrouded in mystery due to the lack of archaeological excavations within it. In 1923, 51 clay tablets dating back to the mid-second millennium BC were accidentally discovered on the southern side of the citadel [12]. These tablets were mentioned in writings from the era of the Babylonian King Hammurabi (1730

– 1688 BC) These tablets indicated that Kirkuk and its citadel were the capital of the GUTI state during the period (2210 - 2116 BC) [13].

Kirkuk Citadel is considered one of the oldest archaeological sites in Iraq. The citadel was an important center for trade and culture throughout the ages, witnessing many civilizations that succeeded one another in Kirkuk, including the Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Arabs, Ottomans, and Kurdish emirates [14], [15].

Kirkuk Citadel also served as an administrative and military center during the reign of the Assyrian King Ashurbanipal in the seventh century BC. They used it as a center for the worship of the god Adad. It also received attention during the Seleucid era, particularly from Seleucus I (312–281 BC), one of Alexander the Great's successors [16]. However, its importance declined during the Sasanian period, as Sasanian kings committed massacres against its inhabitants. Historical sources mention that Shapur II killed a hundred thousand Christians in front of Kirkuk's church, noting that most of the inhabitants of the Bajarmī region (Baqirma – Beit Garmai – Tarmiyān), of which Kirkuk was the center, had converted to Christianity.

Life and civilizational activity continued in Kirkuk Citadel from these historical stages until 1990. The city was almost confined to the citadel until the beginning of the eighteenth-century AD, after which people began building houses on the plain outside the citadel walls [17], [18], [19], [20].

Kirkuk Citadel, with its circular design, an elevation of 18 meters above ground level, an estimated area of 200,000 square meters, and its location east of the Khasa River, embodies civilizational evidence throughout the ages. The citadel once had four main entrances: Bab al-Hajari and Bab al-Toub on the western side, and Bab Sab' Banat and Bab al-Huloujiya on the eastern side. It was a rich cultural mix, comprising four residential neighborhoods: Hamam, Al-Qalaa, Maidan, and Zindan, housing 760 residential units, religious centers, and service facilities. Approximately 4,000 people of various ethnic components (Jews, Assyrians, Kurds, and Turkmen) and religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) lived there [21].

The citadel is rich in numerous archaeological features of high heritage and architectural value, reflecting different ethnic and religious cultures throughout the ages. Among the most important of these landmarks are the shrines of Prophet Daniel, Ezra, and Hanin, the Grand Mosque, Al-Arian Mosque, the Green Dome, the Old Church, Shah Ghazi School, and Qaisariya Market... and others, in addition to many traditional residential houses of prominent figures [22], [23].

Kirkuk Citadel is not just an archaeological site; it is also a symbol of the cultural identity of many ethnic and religious components that inhabited it, including Kurds, Turkmen, and Assyrians. The citadel was a center of social and economic life in Kirkuk, as it contained traditional markets, mosques, and churches reflecting the city's religious and cultural diversity [24], [25].

Historical sources indicate that Kirkuk Citadel is distinguished from Erbil Citadel by the abundance and importance of its historical buildings, as it includes prominent landmarks such as mosques, churches, shrines, and schools. Kirkuk Citadel also preserves a collection of architectural and heritage-rich *tīqan* (recesses/niches), elements that Erbil Citadel lacks [26], [27]. On the other hand, the alleys of Kirkuk Citadel are wider compared to those of Erbil Citadel, allowing vehicles to pass through many of them. However, Erbil Citadel surpasses Kirkuk Citadel in terms of architectural beauty, especially concerning the beauty of its houses and their unique architectural design.

2. Kirkuk Citadel Restoration and Displacement of its Residents in 1989

The preservation of antiquities and heritages is a fundamental principle in archaeological and heritage renewal operations. This includes the restoration and maintenance of buildings with historical and architectural value, such as arches, domes, vaults, structural and textual ornamentation, in addition to shrines of prominent figures, monuments, and historical and religious buildings, as is the case with the ancient Kirkuk

Citadel [28], [29]. Methods of heritage preservation vary between restoration, reconstruction, and maintenance, all aiming to preserve this ancient historical legacy and inspire its elements in the design of the modern urban environment for the Kirkuk Citadel community.

In the 1980s, Kirkuk Citadel suffered from severe deterioration. While residences occupied most of the citadels, they were in poor condition and continuously shrinking. This was due to the local government's neglect, which led to water leakage and erosion of building foundations, as well as a lack of house maintenance and the expansion of streets at the expense of residences [30]. As a result, the percentage of residents decreased to only 42% of the citadel's area, with most of them in poor condition. 45% of the houses were in moderate condition, and only 4% were in good condition. As for heritage houses of historical value, they represented 8% of all buildings.

The Department of Antiquities and Heritage initiated a project to revive the heritage citadel in Kirkuk starting from May 1, 1978. Work on this project continued until 1989, during which the following were revived and maintained: the Green Dome, Al-Ourayan Mosque, Bab Al-Tub, parts of the northern wall, and the expropriation and maintenance of 43 heritage houses. In addition, all walls overlooking the citadel's alleys and paths were treated, and an area of 20,000 square meters of the citadel's alleys were paved with surface drainage [31], [32], [33].

In 1989, the Kirkuk Antiquities Inspectorate submitted a proposal to the Department of Antiquities and Heritage at the Ministry of Culture and Information. The proposal included a comprehensive plan for the maintenance and restoration of archaeological and residential buildings within Kirkuk Citadel, along with a vision for its development. In its proposal, the Inspectorate requested the necessity of expropriating all heritage houses and properties located within the citadel's scope to facilitate maintenance and development, and to place them under the management of the Department of Antiquities and Heritage [34]. However, events took a different turn. A letter from the Presidency of the Republic, numbered (33511) and dated September 20, 1989, was issued, stipulating the transfer of ownership of all heritage houses and properties in Kirkuk Citadel from the Department of Antiquities and Heritage to the local administration in Kirkuk Governorate. The ownership of Kirkuk Citadel was transferred by virtue of a handover and receipt protocol, thus ending the relationship of the Ministry of Culture and Information/Department of Antiquities and Heritage with it on October 4, 1989. After the local administration received the citadel, it expropriated all houses and worked to evacuate their residents [35], [36]. Thus, the local administration became responsible for expropriating all properties in the citadel, which marked a significant turning point in the history of the archaeological site and served as the first step in displacing the citadel's residents and determining the fate of Kirkuk Citadel.

3. Stages of Demolition of Kirkuk Citadel 1990-1998: Analyzing Political and Cultural Motives:

On November 26, 1989, the Kirkuk Antiquities Inspector sent an official letter to the Kirkuk Municipality Directorate. The letter clarified that the local administration in the governorate owned the heritage houses and properties located in Kirkuk Citadel, according to a letter from the Presidential Diwan on September 20, 1989 [37]. In his letter, the inspector also requested that relevant and responsible authorities be contacted to address the precarious situation of the heritage houses, enforce the eviction notices issued to their residents, and make appropriate decisions regarding the fate of these houses.

On March 16, 1990, Kirkuk Citadel witnessed an inspection visit by the then Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein. On that day, Saddam appeared on television, addressing the public from in front of the citadel, and issued directives requiring the removal of houses from Kirkuk Citadel and compensation for their owners [38], [39]. Saddam's directives were not limited to television statements but were officially documented in a

letter sent to the Ministry of Information. This document confirmed the formation of a specialized committee on the same day of the visit, March 16, 1990, with the aim of carrying out the demolition of the citadel and identifying houses with an area less than 200 square meters in preparation for their acquisition and removal.

In implementation of this decision, the then Governor of Tamim issued an administrative order to form a committee for the demolition of the citadel and the identification of houses with an area less than (200 sq. m) for acquisition and demolition [40]. It stated: "In implementation of the order of the President Leader, may God protect him, during his visit to the governorate on March 16, 1990. We decided to form a committee consisting of the gentlemen whose names and job titles are listed below for the purpose of surveying and appraising properties located in Kirkuk Citadel with an area less than 200 square meters, provided that their work is completed within three days, definitively".

A committee was formed chaired by Ali Nasser Al-Saadoon, District Officer of Kirkuk Center, with the membership of: Jazi Hazza' Khalaf, representative of the Ba'ath Party in Kirkuk; Ramzi Mustafa Ahmed, Director of Legal Affairs in the Governorate; Muhammad Hassan Taqi, Director of Kirkuk Municipality; Issa Salbi Saeed, Director of Local Administration Properties; Ibrahim Muhammad Mahmoud, Director of Urban Planning; Mahmoud Hassan Abbas, Director of Real Estate Registration; Ghaib Fadel Karim, Director of Kirkuk Antiquities Inspectorate; and Lazar Yoas Lazar, Local Administration Surveyor [41], [42]. This formation reflects the speed with which the Governor's administration implemented the Iraqi President's orders. The presence of many local directors and officials in the committee indicates the governorate's readiness to implement orders quickly and effectively. It also shows the extent of the party's interference in the affairs of the heritage Kirkuk Citadel, as the presence of a representative of the ruling Ba'ath Party in the committee clearly demonstrates its dominance over the operations and monitoring of the work progress [43], [44].

The committee commenced its work and inventoried old houses with an area of 200 square meters or less. On August 4, 1990, Kirkuk Municipality delivered residential plots, approximately 450 residential plots, to those affected by the demolition decision and moved the debris of the houses outside the municipal boundaries. A list of heritage buildings and houses owned by the Department of Antiquities and Heritage was also delivered, marked on the attached map for preservation during the demolition of residential houses [45].

2. Materials and Methods

The Governorate committee began implementing the decision to demolish houses located around the historic Kirkuk Citadel on November 29, 1990, instead of the previously scheduled date at the beginning of 1991. The contractor commenced the first phase of the demolition operation, which includes the removal of approximately 500 houses, with about 15 houses already demolished. The plan also includes the demolition of an additional 80 to 100 houses whose legal procedures have not been completed due to inheritance issues. This large number of houses, approaching 600 buildings, constitutes a significant part of the urban fabric of the citadel and threatens to cause a radical change in its distinctive historical and heritage character.

The efforts of the Governorate committee to develop the citadel turned into a historical and architectural disaster. Instead of restoring and preserving its heritage character, the committee systematically destroyed it, leading to the loss of the citadel's authentic architectural essence. Residential houses were demolished, especially those with an area less than 200 square meters. Due to the scarcity of land in the citadel, houses with an area greater than 200 square meters are extremely few, and even these remaining houses became scattered and distant, making life in them impossible and forcing their residents to leave.

The demolition operations initiated by the local administration to demolish houses and heritage buildings in Kirkuk Citadel in late 1990 aroused widespread dissatisfaction in academic and archaeological circles. As a result, high-ranking academic and archaeological figures intervened with the highest authorities in the state and submitted proposals to preserve the integrity of the citadel and develop it. Prominent among these figures was the archaeologist Abdul Raqeeb Youssef, who sent a letter to the Iraqi President on December 8, 1990, demanding a reversal of the decision to demolish the heritage houses in the citadel, a reconsideration of the formation of the committees, and a halt to the project's implementation, warning that the project would lead to the dispersion of the citadel and its inhabitants, making it merely a deserted archaeological mound devoid of its civilizational fabric and historical and heritage architecture.

In Abdul Raqeeb Youssef's letter to Saddam Hussein, it stated: "...And in order to achieve a comprehensive scientific and technical development of the old city, all forms of demolition must be stopped immediately and an expanded committee formed chaired by the Director General of Antiquities and Heritage and with the membership of some professors from the Department of Architectural Engineering at Baghdad University and a number of historians and heritage experts to re-survey the citadel and study its development scientifically...We ask for your assistance and contribution in saving this historical city of civilization, and you are up to the responsibility, possessing supreme awareness towards antiquities and heritage...".

3. Results and Discussion

After the President of the Republic of Iraq reviewed the letter from Abd al-Raqib Yusuf, the Presidency Council officially addressed the Ministry of Culture and Information with letter No. on December 8, 1990, requesting their review and opinion regarding the contents of the letter. The Department of Antiquities and Heritage at the Ministry of Culture and Information responded to the Presidency Council's letter on December 13, 1990, with official letter No. (1/1/385), detailing the matter of Kirkuk Citadel, which Abd al-Raqib Yusuf had raised. The response stated:

1. One million Iraqi Dinars were allocated for the restoration, maintenance, and development of Kirkuk Citadel as a first phase, and the Department of Antiquities and Heritage was able to carry out specific works.
2. In implementation of a decision by the Presidency Council, the department handed over heritage houses to the governorate, in accordance with the order stipulating local administration oversight of the Kirkuk Citadel project.
3. The Citadel is built upon numerous archaeological layers from very ancient periods, reaching back to the Sumerian era. Furthermore, the style of the buildings currently erected on the Citadel is known as the "Hiri style" in Islamic architecture, and these models on the Citadel are currently the only remaining examples of this style.
4. Following the President's visit to the Citadel on March 16, 1990, a committee was formed by the relevant departments in the governorate to survey and inventory houses with an area of less than 200 m² for the purpose of expropriation and demolition. Accordingly, the necessary funds were allocated.
5. Based on this, the Department of Antiquities and Heritage conducted a new survey of all archaeological and heritage buildings that highlight the Citadel's archaeological and heritage role.

The letter from the Department of Antiquities and Heritage also included some observations and proposals to the Presidency of the Republic regarding the Kirkuk Citadel project. Among the most important of these observations and proposals were: preserving all archaeological sites within the Citadel, the necessity of removing the current ruins and debris between the Citadel buildings to consider their future utilization for tourism, cultural, and health facilities, the Department of Antiquities and Heritage conducting excavation and maintenance operations in the Citadel, allocating necessary funds for excavation and maintenance of heritage houses and buildings, the Department

of Antiquities and Heritage overseeing all designs and maintenance and restoration work carried out by the competent authorities in the governorate, and the necessity of halting demolition work at present until the committee's study of the Citadel's situation is completed, and working to revive the outer wall of the Citadel or maintain the houses overlooking its slopes.

It is observed from the proposals of the Department of Antiquities and Heritage that there is a focus on preserving the historical and architectural identity of Kirkuk Citadel, conducting precise excavation and maintenance operations, involving experts in planning and restoration, and stopping arbitrary demolition work. The department also emphasized the need to utilize heritage buildings for cultural and tourism purposes, while preserving the authentic heritage fabric of the Citadel. It becomes clear that Abd al-Raqib Yusuf's letter to the President resulted in a reconsideration of the demolition process of Kirkuk Citadel by the local administration.

Attempts to demolish the Citadel in the first phase were halted thanks to the intervention of academic and archaeological figures with the Iraqi President, in addition to the efforts of archaeologist Abd al-Raqib Yusuf, who sent several letters to the Ministry of Culture and Information's Presidency Office. It is worth noting that approximately one hundred houses were demolished before these attempts were stopped.

It appears that the decision by the Presidency of the Republic to stop the demolition of the Citadel and the displacement of its residents at the end of 1990 was not adhered to by the local administration in Kirkuk. This was evident from the letter from the Department of Antiquities and Heritage to the Presidency of the Republic, which indicated that the governorate informed and ordered the handover of the areas exposed of the Citadel to the Department of Antiquities for excavation purposes, after the demolition of houses with an area of less than 200 square meters. Coordination was made with the Ministry of Interior for clear criteria. Therefore, pursuant to the department's letter to the Ministry of Interior No. (7/7/2/2/537) on November 11, 1991, the department dispatched a team that conducted a survey for the aforementioned purpose and submitted a report detailing the necessity of observing the following matters during demolition or removal: retaining complete architectural pieces, merging small, close houses and converting them into larger ones instead of demolishing them, removing debris and rubble from the Citadel buildings, reviving the outer wall of the Citadel and maintaining houses overlooking the slope, and obtaining approval from the Department of Antiquities before conducting any maintenance or restoration work in the Citadel. The Ministry of Interior endorsed these criteria and informed the local administration.

The implementation of the President's order on March 16, 1990, was linked to expropriation operations carried out in two batches, the last of which was at the end of 1991. It was also linked to the evacuation of residents, which did not end until May 16, 1993, when the final warnings were issued to tenants to vacate their homes within one month from the above date.

Meanwhile, the municipality had begun the demolition of houses, and the demolition extended to most facilities of the Citadel, contrary to the mentioned criteria. All doors, windows, columns, and other architectural elements were also removed. The Department of Antiquities and Heritage objected to this situation and repeatedly demanded to stop the demolition and return the removed architectural elements. The last notification and demand to the Kirkuk Municipality was on November 30, 1993.

It appears that the objection of the Ministry of Culture and Information to the local administration's continued demolition of the Citadel had no effect on the local administration in stopping its work. A committee for the development of the Citadel was formed on January 20, 1993, by the Ministry of Interior, headed by the Director-General of Municipalities and with the membership of representatives from the Ministry of Interior and a representative from Antiquities, to implement the President's order issued on March 16, 1990. The committee submitted its study on February 24, 1993, and its

proposals for the maintenance and development of the Citadel, which included: "preserving archaeological sites and heritage buildings and houses with a distinctive heritage character, developing a detailed joint plan for the future appearance of the Citadel for tourism and services, allocating a part of the Citadel free of constructions for archaeological excavations, and preserving the houses surrounding the body of the Citadel." The committee also provided a breakdown of the work phases for the Citadel's maintenance and its cost, estimated at around (28) million dinars, with a four-year implementation period.

The Ministry of Interior informed the Presidency Council about the formation of the Kirkuk Citadel development committee, along with the Director-General of Municipalities, in official letter No. (2557) on June 14, 1993. However, the Presidency Council's response was a decision to the Ministry of Interior indicating the handover of Kirkuk Citadel to the Ministry of Culture and Information, Department of Antiquities and Heritage, as soon as possible, according to its letter No. (Q/17083) on June 24, 1993.

The Kirkuk Citadel file was received by the Department of Antiquities and Heritage on July 8, 1993, and the department began taking measures with the municipality to stop water leakage into the Citadel and implement the order to close all entrances to protect the Citadel. It is worth noting that the Citadel was completely ruined when it was received by the Department of Antiquities and Heritage.

Pursuant to the letter from the Presidency Council, the Ministry of Interior circulated a letter to the local administration in Kirkuk with its letter No. (3/13/260) on September 8, 1993, informing the local administration of the content of the Presidency Council's letter No. (S/9/24192) on September 5, 1993, stating that it is appropriate to postpone consideration of the Kirkuk Citadel development project at the present time.

The first phase of the Kirkuk Citadel demolition project stopped after the completion of the displacement of all Citadel residents in 1993. A decision was made to destroy Kirkuk Citadel during Saddam Hussein's visit to the city on April 1, 1998, accompanied by the then-Governor of Kirkuk, Iyad Futeih Khalifa al-Rawi. The next day, April 2, 1998, a letter from the Presidency Council, bearing number (7108), was issued ordering the demolition of the Citadel (Presidency Council, 2/4/1998), and an amount of 250 million Iraqi Dinars was allocated as a first payment for the demolition process.

The news was published in the "Sawt al-Tamim" newspaper, in its combined sixth and seventh issues for 1998, regarding the decision for the second phase of Kirkuk Citadel's demolition. It stated: "In implementation of the order of President Leader Saddam Hussein, work continues in Tamim Governorate to remove debris and maintain archaeological sites that will be preserved in Kirkuk Citadel, with an allocation of 250 million Iraqi Dinars. A main committee, including a group of specialized cadres from the Governor's office and the Tamim Antiquities Department, will carry out the work by 'amanah' (trustee) and under the supervision of Lieutenant General Staff Iyad Futeih Khalifa al-Rawi, Governor of Tamim. This task will be completed within a period of 70 days."

The demolition began on June 10 of the same year. It is worth noting that in the first phase, only about 100 houses were demolished by the implementing authorities, while in the second phase, all houses, approximately 600 dwellings, were demolished.

When the Kirkuk Antiquities Inspectorate confirmed the plan to demolish all houses in Kirkuk Citadel in this phase, it submitted a memorandum to the Department of Antiquities and Heritage to address the local administration in Kirkuk with an official letter on May 5, 1998. It requested the local administration to carry out the demolition while observing the observations of the Kirkuk Antiquities Inspectorate, which requested the exclusion of archaeological and heritage areas from demolition and leveling works. Also, the debris should be removed under the supervision of the Kirkuk Antiquities Inspectorate, and usable materials such as windows, doors, and door sills should be separated. Heavy machinery should not be used near archaeological and heritage areas,

along with some other observations (Ministry of Culture and Information, Department of Antiquities and Heritage, 1998, pp. 1-2). Through the intervention of the Kirkuk Antiquities Inspectorate, it was able to save only 55 archaeological monuments and heritage houses from demolition.

The complete demolition of the Citadel, along with the removal of demolition debris from Kirkuk Citadel, ended in September 1998. The rebar from the demolished buildings remained to be delivered and stored in Kirkuk Qishla, after the Department of Antiquities and Heritage requested the local administration, which supervised the demolition, in official letter No. on September 6, 1998, stating: "Given the completion of debris removal operations in Kirkuk Citadel, kindly transfer the rebar located in the Citadel to the Authority's warehouses in Kirkuk Qishla..." .

The second phase of the Kirkuk Citadel demolition, carried out by the local administration in the city under the order of the then-President, led to the complete destruction of the archaeological, cultural, and historical part of the Citadel, and even included the demolition of Hassan Maki's shrine. Only a few houses, a mosque, and a church remain from the Citadel and are still standing today. The demolition had devastating social, economic, and cultural impacts. The city lost a significant part of its historical heritage, which affected the identity of the residents. In addition, the demolition exacerbated ethnic tensions, as Kurds, Turkmens, and Assyrians felt that their historical and cultural identity was threatened.

5. Multiple Impacts on the City's Cultural, Ethnic, and Historical Heritage:

Kirkuk Citadel is considered one of the oldest cities in Iraq, dating back 4,000 to 5,000 years. It was a prominent urban center in ancient times, and Kirkuk Citadel is considered one of the most important historical landmarks in the region. The citadel was located on the banks of the Khasa River and was a center of civilization and culture for the city's ethnic components. However, this citadel was destroyed as part of the ruling regime's policy.

Many archaeological and heritage sites in Kirkuk, including Kirkuk Citadel, which was considered the capital of an ancient Kurdish state known as the "Gutian state," were destroyed. These sites were demolished as part of Saddam's policy aimed at rewriting and normalizing Iraqi history, where historians and archaeologists were forced to adopt a historical narrative that promoted the identity of a specific component and marginalized the identity of other components.

Under the pretext of preserving its historical character, the inhabitants of Kirkuk Citadel, who had lived for centuries amidst its civilizational and heritage landmarks, such as the Nabi Daniel Mosque, the ruins of the Church of Sorrows, and its heritage houses, were displaced. These ruins held a special place in the hearts of the original inhabitants of the citadel, and those heritage houses, like the houses of Latifour, Siddiq Al-Allaf, Ali Agha, and Abdul Ghazi Effendi, remained witnesses to their history. There was no justification for demolishing Kirkuk Citadel, which represents a cherished part of all Kirkuk's residents, except to complete the Arabization policy initiated by the previous political regime by changing the city's name from Kirkuk to Al-Ta'meem and altering the demographic composition of the city. An audio tape of Ali Hassan al-Majid, then governor of Kirkuk, found at his headquarters during the 1991 uprising, revealed the regime's plans to change the ethnic character of Kirkuk's neighborhoods, markets, and heritage landmarks.

The demolition of Kirkuk Citadel was part of the systematic Arabization policy pursued by the political regime against the city of Kirkuk since the last quarter of the last century. This policy included changing identity, language, history, and heritage, in addition to the forced displacement of indigenous populations in other cities. Kirkuk was one of the first cities to witness these repressive measures. After the failure of negotiations between the Iraqi government and the Kurdish movement in 1974, the Arabization campaign began in Kirkuk. The initial measures included separating historical districts

and sub-districts from Kirkuk city, such as Tuz Khurmatu, which was annexed to Tikrit, Kalar and Kifri, which were annexed to Diyala Governorate, and Chamchamal, which was annexed to Sulaymaniyah. In 1989, a decision was issued to displace the residents of Kirkuk Citadel, and in 1990, the first phase of demolishing residential and heritage buildings began under the pretext of maintaining and restoring historical artifacts. This was a continuation of the Arabization policy, which completed the project of displacing the citadel's residents and demolishing residential and heritage buildings in 1998.

During the period from 1990 to 1998, Kirkuk witnessed widespread forced displacement operations against Kurdish and Turkmen residents. Thousands of families were forced to leave their homes and move to other areas in Iraq, while Arab families were brought in to replace them. This policy not only aimed at changing the city's demographic composition but was also an attempt to erase the city's ethnic identity.

Abdul-Raqeeb Yusuf Hassan describes his visit to Kirkuk Citadel on July 22, 1990, saying: "I have never seen Kirkuk Citadel as sad and paralyzed as I saw it this time... The signs of sadness were evident on the faces of its inhabitants... and the residents felt hopeless about preserving their homes and heritage".

Saddam Hussein's visit to Kirkuk Citadel on March 16, 1990, was not merely a fleeting visit; rather, it carried within it a fateful decision to demolish the citadel. This decision was not isolated but was closely linked to the Halabja massacre committed by the Iraqi regime on the same day, March 16, 1988, which claimed the lives of five thousand Kurds. Saddam Hussein's goal in deciding to demolish the citadel was to instill terror and fear in the hearts of the Kurds, reminding them of the fate of Halabja and Anfal, to subjugate and intimidate them.

One of the main reasons for the demolition of Kirkuk Citadel was the desire to erase the cultural and historical identity of non-Arab ethnic groups in the city, especially Kurds, Turkmen, and Assyrians. By destroying the citadel, the Iraqi government attempted to weaken the historical ties of these groups in the city, thereby completing the process of demographic change.

Although the citadel had great historical value, its location in the center of Kirkuk city also gave it economic value. The Iraqi government wanted to exploit this location for developmental purposes, including building residential and commercial projects. However, this step was also driven by the desire to enhance the control of another component over the city by changing its urban character.

Kirkuk Citadel was also considered a strategic location from a security perspective. During the 1990s, the Iraqi government faced significant security challenges, including fear of a repeat of the Kurdish uprising after the 1991 uprising and threats from Kurdish forces. By demolishing the citadel, the government attempted to eliminate any sites that could serve as strongholds for resistance to the political regime. This was evident from Kirkuk Governorate's letter to the Department of Antiquities and Heritage, requesting that the surveyed heritage houses for preservation be included in the demolition list, stating in the letter the justification: "...that we will preserve all archaeological sites and heritage houses. As for the other houses surrounding the sites, they have become abandoned and dilapidated, making them difficult to control from a security perspective due to the city's conditions...".

Although the government planned to demolish the citadel in 1990, the assigned committee, including Kirkuk Governor Ali Nasser Al-Sa'doun, was keen to accelerate the demolition process. This is evident from the implementation of the demolition operation on November 19, 1990. The Governor of Kirkuk showed great enthusiasm for demolishing Kirkuk Citadel and implementing the Arabization policy, especially against ethnic components. This was manifested in his refusal to implement the decision of the Presidency of the Republic's office to halt the demolition. The Presidency's office sent an official letter to the Governor demanding a halt to the demolition, but he refused and sent a letter explaining the reasons for the refusal in two points:

1. The demolition of the citadel is a decision of the President of the Republic and must be implemented, and no party has the right to interfere.
2. We spent money on this work and compensated the residents of the citadel. Instead of 200 square meters, we allocated 300 square meters of land to each family. Therefore, the demolition of the citadel should not stop.

Abdul-Raqeeb Yusuf Hassan stated in one of his works: "When the Office of the President of the Republic issued an order to halt the demolition of Kirkuk Citadel, the demolition contractor secretly told him that they would not stop the demolition process. He added that the deputy governor of Kirkuk asked them to demolish the houses as quickly as possible." The contractor says: "We used to demolish one house a day, but due to the interference of officials in Kirkuk's administration, we started demolishing nine houses a day".

Dr. Muayyad Saeed, Director General of the Department of Antiquities and Heritage at the Ministry of Culture and Information, stated that the central government had halted the decision to demolish the citadel. However, local officials in Kirkuk's administration insisted on proceeding with the demolition.

Similarly, the Kirkuk Antiquities Inspectorate, in cooperation with those tasked with surveying the archaeological houses in the citadel, sought to protect some remaining houses from demolition and include them in the heritage survey list. However, Kirkuk Governorate intervened and issued an official letter number dated October 13, 1991, warning the Inspectorate against this, stating: "With the intention of developing special designs for Kirkuk Citadel, we have noticed that you have placed archaeological markings on a large group of non-heritage houses under the pretext of preserving archaeological and heritage sites and their surroundings, as well as on scattered sections of the citadel's neighborhoods, which indicates the placement of designs and obstructs the ongoing demolition and debris removal operations".

The Presidency of the Republic exploited its security concerns, specifically its fear of Peshmerga forces centering in Kirkuk Citadel and opposing the government, to justify its urgent request to the Ministry of Interior to fence the citadel through its official letter numbered on June 24, 1993, which stated: "It has been decided to hand over Kirkuk Citadel to the Ministry of Culture and Information as soon as possible and to fence it by any available means and material to prevent citizens from entering it and residing illegally in it, and to commence the required works in the citadel according to the directives of His Excellency the President...". The security authorities in the governorate did indeed deploy military forces in the citadel and later converted it into a military base.

After the complete destruction of Kirkuk Citadel in 1998, the political regime transformed it into a military base. Military forces were deployed there due to its elevated and strategic location for Kirkuk Governorate

The demolition of Kirkuk Citadel had devastating cultural and social effects. The city lost a significant part of its historical heritage, which affected the identity of the local population. In addition, the demolition exacerbated ethnic and religious tensions in the region, as ethnic components felt that their cultural identity was being threatened. This was because the former regime's policy aimed to strengthen the control of another component over the city and weaken the cultural identities of other ethnic groups.

The residents of Kirkuk considered the citadel a sacred place, but they were deprived of visiting it due to restrictions imposed by the local government at the time. After the change of the political regime on April 10, 2003, when international coalition forces and local forces liberated Kirkuk city, residents were able to visit the demolished citadel daily, after such visits were prohibited by government instructions and decisions.

Upon the completion of the displacement of Kirkuk Citadel residents and its demolition between 1990 and 1998, these events left multiple and profound impacts on the original inhabitants of the Citadel. These repercussions included crucial social, economic, and cultural aspects, among them:

Social Impact: Disintegration of families, the loss of ethnic and cultural identity, and a sense of injustice

Forced displacement is one of the most devastating phenomena that can afflict societies, leaving deep scars that are not easily erased by time. Perhaps what happened in Kirkuk Citadel in the early nineties of the last century had a significant social impact on its residents, including family disintegration, loss of identity, and a sense of injustice.

Kirkuk Citadel, with its ancient houses and narrow alleys, was more than just buildings; it was a living embodiment of the history of an ancient city and a symbol of family and cultural cohesion inherited through generations. When the proposal to restore the buildings was presented in 1989, which quickly turned into a decision for compulsory expropriation, it was not merely a transfer of property ownership. Instead, it was the forced removal of its original inhabitants from their homes that witnessed their joys and sorrows, places where their generations grew up, and which were an integral part of their identity.

Even compensation with residential plots outside the Citadel's boundaries and Kirkuk Municipality was not enough to compensate for the loss. Families lost their neighborhood ties and were forced to rebuild their lives in strange new environments, leading to family disintegration and extending that disintegration to the larger social fabric. Moreover, the systematic demolition of residential buildings and heritage landmarks, which began in 1990 and continued until 1998, was not merely the removal of stones, but rather the erasure of temporal traces of a culture and ethnic identity formed over centuries. Imagine generations raised on the stories and heritage of the place, only to wake up one day and find that everything connecting them to this past had been raised to the ground. This feeling of losing roots left an enormous void in the souls of the Citadel's residents, which is difficult to compensate.

Forced displacement cannot be separated from a deep sense of injustice. When individuals are forcibly expropriated from their rightful homes and displaced from their original places under the pretext of restoration that turned into demolition, it generates a feeling of oppression and subjugation. This feeling is not limited to those directly affected; it extends to subsequent generations and becomes part of the collective memory of the community.

The political regime's decisions to displace the Citadel's residents and demolish it left a profound psychological and social impact. Displacement was not just a transient event; it was a psychological and social trauma whose effects accumulated over the long term.

The experience of demolishing Kirkuk Citadel involved not only material losses. It concerned the loss of belonging, the tearing apart of family ties, the erasure of cultural identity, and the generation of a sense of injustice whose impact continued for subsequent years. Preserving historical places does not mean removing their original inhabitants; instead, it must be balanced with their right to live in their historical environments and preserve their cultural identity.

Economic Impact: loss of property and the deterioration of living conditions.

The transfer of ownership of residential buildings from citizens and archaeological landmarks from the Kirkuk Antiquities Department to the local government in Kirkuk was the first blow to the Citadel's residents, as residential buildings were forcibly expropriated from their original inhabitants. They were compensated with residential plots outside the Citadel's boundaries and Kirkuk Municipality, which meant their deportation and displacement from their original homes and communities they were accustomed to, leaving behind thousands of families who lost their properties and sources of livelihood.

The economic impacts did not stop at expropriation and displacement. This demolition process led to the destruction of properties that represented capital for many families. Families lost their homes in which they had invested for many years, and they lost commercial shops that were their source of livelihood

This destruction was not limited to the material aspect but extended to the moral and social aspects, as residents lost their historical and cultural connection to the place.

The economic consequences of these measures were severe for the residents of Kirkuk Citadel and had a direct impact on the deterioration of living conditions. Displaced families found themselves forced to start from scratch in new areas.

Moreover, the compensation they received was often insufficient to cover the value of the property they lost or the costs of relocation and re-establishment. This led to increased poverty and a deterioration in the standard of living for many families.

Cultural Impact: Loss of Heritage and Distortion of Collective Memory in Kirkuk Citadel

Cultural artifacts serve as a mirror reflecting the history of nations and peoples. They are not merely ancient buildings or artistic masterpieces, but rather a living collective memory, carrying the stories and experiences of generations and forming an integral part of our identity. But what happened to Kirkuk Citadel was tampering with these artifacts through deliberate demolition under the pretext of restoration or modernization. Herein lies the cultural catastrophe that transcends the loss of buildings to reach the distortion of collective memory and the heritage of peoples.

The demolition process was not just the removal of old buildings; it was a systematic destruction of a diverse heritage representing centuries of history and cultural coexistence among ethnic component. The Citadel thereby lost not only its historical buildings but also the material evidence of the lives of communities that lived there, and its social fabric that tells stories of coexistence and diversity .

The loss of diverse heritage in Kirkuk Citadel reflects deeper dimensions than mere material loss. Every house and every alley held a memory, and every archaeological landmark bore witness to different historical periods. When this evidence is demolished, the collective memory of society is distorted and loses a significant part of its reference. New generations are deprived of a direct connection to their roots and history.

Through this crime targeting the historic Kirkuk Citadel, the former political regime sought to erase the city's historical and cultural landmarks as part of a broader project aimed at genocide and displacing its residents. These practices stand in stark contradiction to universal values that advocate for the protection of historic cities, which are considered throughout the world as a human heritage to be preserved and transformed into tourist sites that highlight the richness of history and culture.

4. Conclusion

- a. The central and local governments played a pivotal role in the demolition of the historic Kirkuk Citadel, which occurred in two phases: the first began in 1990 and the second in 1998. Analysis of the available data shows that the demolition decisions were made following successive visits by the then-President, Saddam Hussein, to the Citadel, where he issued direct orders for the demolition operations from within the Citadel itself. This chronological sequence of events underscores the direct impact of political decisions on the destruction of heritage landmarks
- b. The demolition of Kirkuk Citadel was part of the former Iraqi regime's systematic Arabization policy, which aimed to alter the city's demographics and erase its ethnic identity. The political regime used the demolition of the Citadel as a tool to instill terror and fear in the hearts of the city's residents
- c. The demolition of the Citadel was an attempt to erase the cultural and historical identity of the diverse groups in the city.
- d. The demolition of the Citadel led to the city losing a significant portion of its historical heritage, impacting the identity of the local population through the destruction of numerous archaeological and heritage landmarks within the Citadel, including mosques, traditional, and residential homes.

- e. The demolition of the Citadel exacerbated ethnic and religious tensions in the region, as ethnic components felt their cultural identity was being threatened through the alteration of historical and geographical names in Kirkuk.
- f. The Citadel was transformed from a historical city into a military base. The demolition of the Citadel sparked local condemnation, with many academic and archaeological figures considering it a violation of local and international cultural heritage. These academic and archaeological figures intervened with higher authorities in the state and submitted proposals to preserve the Citadel's integrity and develop it.
- g. The displacement process had a deep social impact on the original inhabitants of the Citadel. The social consequences of displacement included family disintegration, loss of their ethnic and cultural identity, and a sense of injustice.
- h. It also had an economic impact on the residents of the Citadel through the expropriation of homes, loss of property, and deterioration of living conditions after the displacement.
- i. The displacement also had cultural consequences for the residents of the Citadel, including the loss of diverse heritage and the distortion of collective memory.

Recommendations

- a. **Rehabilitation of Kirkuk Citadel:** Directing the central and local governments in Kirkuk to reconsider the process of reviving and rehabilitating Kirkuk Citadel. This should involve restoring it to its former architectural style, as it was before the demolitions carried out by the former regime. The citadel should be transformed into a heritage architectural landmark with historical and tourist benefits for the city. Necessary financial resources from the budget should be allocated to complete the rehabilitation process.
- b. **Legal Accountability:** Taking strict and fair retroactive decisions to hold accountable to everyone involved in and contributing to the demolition of the citadel during the two phases in 1990 and 1998.
- c. **Compensation for Affected Individuals:** Providing generous material compensation and moral support to the residents of Kirkuk Citadel. This is to compensate them for the damage they suffered because of their displacement from their original homes in the citadel. Efforts should also be made to remove all the negative social, economic, and cultural impacts they endured.
- d. **Archaeological Excavations:** Allowing universities and international organizations specialized in archaeological excavations to submit scientific projects for excavation in the layers of Kirkuk Citadel. This aims to discover the artifacts within it and determine the initial construction date of the citadel.

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