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A Look at the Operation Anfal Campaign

By The Associated Press

Saddam Hussein's military carried out the Anfal campaign from 1987-1988, aiming to purge large areas of northern Iraq of Kurdish guerrillas with ties to Iran amid a war between the two countries. The name Anfal is Arabic for "spoils of war" and is the name of the eighth chapter of the Quran, Islam's holy book.

THE VICTIMS: Death toll estimates have varied widely, from 50,000 to as many as 180,000 Kurds. At least 2,000 villages were destroyed, according to Human Rights Watch, the New York-based group that did an extensive investigation of Anfal in 1993.

THE CAMPAIGN: In late 1987, large areas of the Kurdish north were defined as "prohibited zones," where anyone would be considered a guerrilla and subject to a shoot-to-kill policy, according to Human Rights Watch.

Months later, the first of eight waves of the Anfal campaign was launched, lasting until the end of 1988 and moving systematically across northeastern Iraq. The military bombarded villages, sometimes with mustard gas and nerve agents, then sent in troops to raze the communities. Families were taken to camps by the truckload, while in some cases men were executed on the spot, the rights group's report said.

THE CAMPS: Tens of thousands were taken to prison camps in northern and central Iraq, where men and boys were separated from their families. Most of the males disappeared, executed by firing squad and buried in mass graves. Women, children and elderly were held for months in crowded, unsanitary conditions that caused further deaths, according to Human Rights Watch.

THE END: The government announced an amnesty for Kurds in September 1988, declaring that guerrillas had been defeated, and the camps were cleared, with the inmates sent to cities in northern Iraq.

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