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## **Kurdish Women Tell of Rapes in Saddam's Death Camps**

BAGHDAD — Kurdish women told Tuesday how they had witnessed savage rapes and other horrors in Saddam Hussein's death camps, as the ousted Iraqi leader's genocide trial continued.

There were rowdy scenes in the dock as a protesting Saddam and six alleged henchmen were expelled from the court but after a brief closed-door session, the harrowing testimony of former inmates continued.

One woman, speaking from behind a curtain to preserve her anonymity, told how her family was captured by Iraqi forces in April 1988. Her grandmother died in the prison camp, while she witnessed terrible atrocities.

A warder called Ja'far al-Hillawi used to grope prisoners' breasts, and one day caught a beautiful young woman from Koi Sanjaq, she said.

"He caught her and told her, 'You are mine'. She spat in his face," she told the court. "He tore her clothes and raped her in front of her parents. Then he shot her. She remained alive for several minutes and then died."

Another witness, again shielded by a curtain, said that prisoners had eventually attacked the rapist after another of his victims committed suicide, but that they were savagely beaten in punishment.

And a third Kurdish woman described the terrible conditions in the camp, saying: "A woman with us gave birth in a toilet. We cut the umbilical cord using a broken bottle. The baby was wrapped in rough sackcloth."

Saddam and six former officials were brought to the Iraqi High Tribunal in Baghdad to hear the Kurdish witnesses describe the vicious 1988 Anfal campaign, which government forces carried out in northern Iraq.

As the session continued Saddam attempted to read out a Quranic verse. Judge Muhammad al-Oreibi al-Khalifah closed off the defendant's microphone, triggering a heated row.

When the judge ordered Saddam thrown out of court, his co-defendants leapt to their feet to protest.

Hussein Rashid al-Tikriti branded the prosecution "pimps and traitors" and punched a bailiff who tried to force him back into his seat. He was ejected.

A third defendant, Ali Hassan al-Majid, declared: "I want to see the

sentence passed now. I wish to be executed and finish with this court."

Prosecutors say 182,000 Kurds were killed in death camps, bombings and poison gas attacks. Saddam and his co-defendants insist the operation was a legitimate military campaign against separatist guerrillas.

Saddam and one other defendant, his cousin Majid, a former military commander who became notorious as "Chemical Ali", are accused of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.

The remaining defendants are charged with war crimes and crimes against humanity and all seven accused face the death penalty if convicted.

The defendants' own lawyers are boycotting the trial in protest at alleged interference by the Iraqi government and Judge Khalifah has assigned seven court-appointed lawyers to conduct the defence.

On Monday, four witnesses described how they lost dozens of relatives to mass graves after being rounded up and driven to Nigrat Salman prison camp in southern Iraq, near the city of Samawa.

On Tuesday, more Kurdish women spoke up.

"They told us 'You are families of saboteurs and agents of Iran'. We stayed at the camp for four days and then were moved by buses to al-Dibis," one said, referring to another camp north of Baghdad near the oil city of Kirkuk.

"We saw the same thing there. It was as if it was Doomsday. At this camp I adopted two children in addition to my own two. They were left by their parents," she said, speaking confidently from behind her screen.

"I spent six and a half months at this prison until being set free," she continued. "When I returned to my village two years later, I found that our homes were burnt and that Arab people were ploughing our land."

Many of the inmates did not survive Saddam's gulag. During Monday's testimony prosecutors showed the court the identity cards of many Kurds that had been found in the mass graves which still dot post-war Iraq.

While the Anfal case continues, another panel of judges is preparing to give its verdict in a previous trial against Saddam and another group of former aides alleged to have ordered the killing of 148 Shia civilians.

The court is due to convene on October 16 to set a date for the verdict in that case—dubbed the Dujail trial after the small town north of Baghdad where the victims were seized—and Saddam could be sentenced to death.

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