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Saddam's Cousin Says He Gave Orders to Destroy Kurdish Villages

By Bassem Mroue

BAGHDAD, Iraq — Saddam Hussein's cousin acknowledged on Sunday he had given orders to destroy scores of Kurdish villages and the prosecution in the so-called Anfal trial introduced two dozen documents it said incriminated members of Saddam Hussein's regime in the campaign that killed tens of thousands of Kurds in the 1980s.

"All the orders given to relocate people were my decisions. The orders were given as the region was full of Iranian agents. We had to isolate these saboteurs," said Ali Hassan al-Majid, also known as "Chemical Ali" for his alleged use of chemical weapons against the Kurds.

"I am the one who gave orders to the army to demolish villages and relocate the villagers. The army was responsible to carry out those orders. I gave the instructions to the army."

Al-Majid is one of six defendants who still face charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity stemming from the Anfal military campaign during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war. More than 100,000 Kurds were killed.

Earlier this month al-Majid said he gave orders to execute people who entered prohibited areas on the border with Iran and said he did not regret crushing the Kurdish uprising.

"I am not defending myself. I am not apologizing. I did not make mistake," said Al-Majid, wearing a brown Arab gown and a traditional red-and-white Arab headdress.

A prosecutor had read from documents showing that dozens of villages were destroyed, thousands of people displaced and children as young as nine years old separated from their families.

One documented the destruction of 21 villages in the first half of August 1987. Another claimed 38 villages were destroyed in the second half of June that year. A third from military archives and signed by a brigadier general said, "We have demolished all villages by tanks."

Saddam was among the defendants until he was executed for crimes against humanity on December 30 after he was sentenced to death at an earlier trial for killing of 148 Shiite Muslims after 1982 assassination attempt against him in Dujail.

The trial was adjourned until Monday.

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