

Seth Carpenter-Nichols

Title: “Saddam Hussein: Kurdish Extermination”

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I am **Seth Carpenter-Nichols** and I graduated from IPFW as a History major in December 2016. I became a History major in the Spring 2014 semester and I actively participated in each of my history classes. Even now that I have graduated, I still expand my knowledge on history. I always had a deep passion for history since I was in elementary school. My expertise in history consists of United States Presidents, World War II, world dictators, and the Cold War. I had the honor of participating in last year’s History Conference, when I presented my paper on President Kennedy and the Cuban Missile Crisis. I am glad that I was able to return to this year’s History Conference with a paper on Saddam Hussein and the Kurds.

I chose to write about the mass murder of the Kurdish population by Saddam Hussein because it is one of the worst acts of mass murder in the Middle East and the modern world. Saddam’s power was at full strength in the Middle East, and there was nothing to stop him. The real interest, however, was not that Saddam was able to kill the Kurds, but that he was able to get away with it. The United States government knew what was happening to the Kurds but did nothing to stop it for several years. What I discovered in my research was that greed and stability came first over basic human rights. That is the real tragedy overall in my paper.

Abstract

The triumphs of the twentieth century have been offset by the many tragedies that took place in world, wars, oppression by despotic leaders, and even worse, mass murder. We saw such mass murders in the nations of Nazi Germany, Cambodia, Bosnia, and Rwanda. In the Middle East, a clear example of a similar tragedy was in Iraq under Saddam Hussein. With an iron fist, Saddam controlled Iraq for decades by fear, violence, paranoia, and death, destroying every obstacle in his way for stability and absolute power. Saddam horribly mistreated his people, but the Kurds, in particular, felt the brunt of his wrath. Saddam targeted the Kurds because the Kurds were a stateless people in Iraq, and they were seen as traitors for siding with the Shia Muslims in Iran during the Iran-Iraq War, and whose nationalist aspirations were viewed as a threat to the stability of Iraq. Fueled by anger and paranoia, Saddam set out to exterminate the Kurdish population in Iraq. Despite evidence of prior discrimination and mistreatment, and with evidence of violence against the Kurds reaching genocidal levels, the U.S. government cared more about its geopolitical and economic interests than about Kurdish lives.

Bibliographical Note

The primary sources I used for my presentation were personal stories compiled from survivor and insider accounts about Saddam Hussein. Newspaper articles and government documents served as evidence that the United States knew about Saddam’s atrocities, as well his use of chemical weapons against the Kurds. Secondary sources included scholarly articles on Kurdish history, the Iran-Iraq War, and Samantha Power’s best-selling book, *A Problem from Hell*.