

The Bombing of the People

5,000 dead within minutes most, of the population being women and children, this act was only one day out of hundreds that the Kurds suffered . In 1986-1989 the Kurdish Nation and its people were chemically bombed. The acts of this Genocide were committed by the war criminal Saddam Hussein and his close alys. The nation of Kurdistan has existed since the first account in 1597. From the 1950's-1970's political leaders would declare the equality between the Kurds and the rest of Iraq, In 1970 a peace agreement was signed between them. Later in the 80's during the Iran-Iraq war the Kurds used this as a distraction to separate from Iraq, yet they were unable to due to Saddam Hussein. It was also at this time Saddam Hussein also used the war as a distraction and bombed the Kurdish nation. It was because of this I decided to focus on the bombing and killing of their people. Many were mistreated, while over 500,000 were sent to detention camps. I was very interested in the concept of how the nation was killed. I wanted to show the horrors of how so many could die at the hands of their leader. During the genocide between 50,000 and 182,000 died, while others were tortured or sent to camps. I was interested in how whole towns could be wiped out in seconds, with most other genocides the victims were normally singled out and killed in person individually while with the Kurdish genocide hundreds-thousands died at a time while they were also looked for and then killed.

The kurds were first bombed in February of 1986. One month later on March, 16, the bombing of Halabja took place. During this between 3,000-5,000 people died due to the chemicals dropped on the city. As one survivor of the genocide recalls, "They used a mix of chemical weapons, including mustard gas, nerve agent, Sarin or a toxic combination against the town of Halabja,"(European Parliament 3-4). After reading this quote I was shocked to get a slight insight to what happened that day and how much destruction happened. After researching this topic so heavily I feel that I was more connected to it and the ideas I could relate it to. I learned a lot about the motives of the genocide and what lead up to it. I wanted to symbolize mostly the aftershock of what happened with the bombings, due to the fact that most people think about the actual genocide rather than what comes after. I wanted the content being displayed be able to be seen as open ended to allow the audience to interpret it in their own ways.

An estimated 7,000-10,000 suffered long term illness after the bombing along with higher cancer and birth defect rates the following year. While researching further on the chemical warfare aspect I also started to get interested in those that committed the genocide such as Saddam Hussein and Ali Hassan al-Majid also known as “Chemical Ali”. One of the men most responsible for many of the deaths in this genocide was “Chemical Ali”...“There was interrogation and torture of captured men between the ages of 15-70 based on orders issued by Al-Majid;” (European Parliament 3-4). Because this man was a war criminal for his acts it made me really want to include him in my research. I wanted to include people like Saddam Hussein and “Chemical Ali” because I think that we need to be more aware of horrors and the crimes that they committed because a lot of us are unaware. Now I know that many involved in these horrific acts have been prosecuted and punished such as Saddam Hussein and Ali Hassan al-Majid due to Capital Punishment. This connects to my project design because these two men were the main reason for so many deaths, Saddam Hussein is featured on my final college and was the cause for so much destruction.

Another portion that I was interested in was the survivors of the genocide. After their homes were bombed many were forced to move to different countries as refugees. A witness to the aftermath of the genocide described the horrific sights: “I passed "hundreds" of dead bodies. Those around me died in a number of ways, suggesting a combination of toxic chemicals, some "just dropped dead" while others "died laughing." Still others took a few minutes to die, first "burning and blistering" or "coughing up green vomit,"(Genocide Watch 29). It is evident that the events that took place the day made a foundation to the Kurdish Genocide. Halabja was one of the main focuses for my project research. Some of the images used on my collage were actually taken the day the city was bombed. It was one of the main landmarks during the genocide.

I think that one of the main messages that needs to be taken out of my project is that we need to start educating the future about more things like this. Before we began this project I had never even heard of the Rwandan Genocide let alone the Kurdish one. I think that our generation needs to be educated about this because we need to know what happened in the past in order to not repeat the same mistakes. Because of this I wanted to symbolize a lot of what happened during the genocide. I decided to make one of the main parts of my project the plaster feet in the sand as a symbolization of the survivors and how they mostly migrated away from the chemical attack sights. I was also really intrigued in what had happened,

especially at Halabja, this is why I decided to make a collage of it as the other focal point to my exhibit.

When I first found out that we got to show our knowledge of this topic through an artistic installation I immediately knew I wanted to do something artistic. I love to show my understandings of through art because I think it's interesting to see information in ways other than writing, this is why I take the more artistic route with most of my projects. What I like most about my project is probably the plaster feet. I love the look of the stone finish and how it connects to the collage and the sand.