



3rd International Conference on Management and Economics

London, United Kingdom

17 - 19 July 2026

The Anfal Campaign and the Destruction of Kurdish Livelihoods: Uncovering the Economic Dimensions of Mass Atrocity

Hawar Rafaat Star
Charmo University, Iraq

Abstract

The Ba'ath regime's systematic campaign of discrimination, violence, and forced displacement against the Kurdish population in Iraq culminated in the 1987–1988 Anfal operations, one of the most extensive episodes of mass atrocity in the modern Middle East. Conducted across eight coordinated military waves, the Anfal campaign not only resulted in the destruction of thousands of Kurdish villages and districts but also deliberately targeted the socio-economic foundations of Kurdish society. Farmers, agricultural labourers, and rural households—whose livelihoods depended almost entirely on agriculture and livestock—became primary victims of these operations. The regime's widespread demolition of rural infrastructure, together with the mass deportation of Kurdish communities into state-controlled camps, produced severe economic dislocation, the collapse of local production systems, and long-term financial deprivation.

This paper undertakes a close, data-driven examination of the economic and social consequences of the Anfal campaign, drawing on archival materials, field reports, and economic analyses to illuminate both the immediate and enduring impacts of these policies. By integrating historical, political, and economic perspectives, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how state violence reshapes economic landscapes and inflicts lasting structural damage on marginalized communities. The findings underscore the necessity of sustained scholarly attention to the economic dimensions of mass atrocities, both for historical accountability and for informing contemporary post-conflict reconstruction efforts.

Keywords: Anfal campaign, Kurdish studies, economic impacts, mass atrocities, financial destruction.