

Letter: Time Runs Out

Author: [Ali Sindi](#)

People in Iraq are fearful of war, and hopeful for change.

I am not a reporter or a writer. But I am writing for those who want to listen to a story from inside Iraq.

It is now around three a.m. in the town of Pirmam where I live, 400 kilometres north of Baghdad and 40 kilometres north of the closest Iraqi troops.

The temperature outside is about minus 5 degrees. The cold doesn't matter if you have proper heating, but what if you only have electricity for eight hours a day? And what if the fuel smuggled in from the Iraqi side is mixed with water? And what if you can only use one of the five heaters you have because you don't have enough of even this watered-down fuel?

Last night, my wife and I decided to take our three daughters and the orphan boy who is living with us to bed as early as possible to keep them warm. But in the middle of the night I decided to write to someone - and you are my victims.

Yesterday, driving back from my office in Erbil, I saw more than four wedding parties. We Kurds like to marry in spring. We believe that the beginning matters and so it is better to choose the season near the beginning of the Kurdish year. You can see the dancing and hear the music all across the countryside. I was surprised. I asked myself: How can these people still be in the mood for music and dressing up and dancing? Are they crazy?

I called the office which registers marriages and asked for figures for marriages this year. The woman in the office said the number is increasing every day, and is far higher than in previous years. I asked her why. "People think they are running out of time," she said.

On the CNN web site it says: "Evacuation in Jordan . . . Deployment in Saudi Arabia . . . Preparedness in Kuwait". The chance of war breaking out in the next few days is very high. The big concern among Kurds is that Turkish troops may move into Iraqi Kurdistan. Although the Iraqi threat is still there, and no one knows what Saddam might do during his last minutes, there is a feeling that whatever he does will affect a limited group of people for a limited period of time. The Turkish intervention will affect more people for a longer time.

In recent days, many Kurdish forces have moved toward the Turkish border, reacting to Turkey's decision to send thousands of troops, artillery pieces and vehicles to the main entrance to Iraqi Kurdistan. Iraqi Kurds now believe that Turkey might intervene unilaterally, without coordinating with the United States. If they do, Kurds will fight.

Kurds are also asking why the United States hasn't provided us with gas masks and protection against chemical attack. They say Saddam still has weapons of mass destruction and in the event of war we are going to be their allies. Are they doing nothing because they know we won't be attacked? Are there any secret measures to protect us?

When the sun rises, we talk about war, about our own concerns as Kurds and as Iraqis, and about the concerns of the Turks, the French and Germans, the Americans and finally of the millions who have demonstrated against war. It is so complicated. Who is right and who is wrong?

The Turks want to occupy northern Iraq and take its oil because it was part of the Ottoman empire nearly 100 years ago. They will try to prevent Iraqi Kurds having their rights after a regime change because they don't want to recognise the rights of the Kurds in Turkey. France and Germany want to prevent a unipolar world. The United States wants revenge against al-Qaeda and whoever might look like a supporter of al-Qaeda. It's also looking for oil, just like everyone else.

As for the millions of anti-war demonstrators we have seen in recent weeks, they didn't stand against Saddam Hussein. They weren't in the streets in 1988 when Saddam used chemical weapons against the Kurds in Iraq. I don't want to be the victim of their slogans. I do want this miserable life under this regime to stop.

I hope there will be a change of regime in Iraq with a minimum of lives lost. I hope Turkey won't move its troops to Iraqi Kurdistan, even under U.S. leadership. I hope the elites of the world will demonstrate and ask Saddam to leave Iraq in order to spare us war. I hope you will forgive me for taking this space to say what I wanted to say.

Ali Sindi, a graduate of Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, is a Kurdish surgeon and former deputy minister of health in the Kurdish government.

Location: [Turkey](#)
[Jordan](#)
[Iraqi Kurdistan](#)
[Iraq](#)

Source URL: <https://iwpr.net/global-voices/letter-time-runs-out>